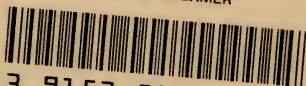






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DENYS THE DREAMER

by
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CHAPTER I

DENYS IS DREAMING

DENYS FITZMAURICE of Murrough sat on the edge of the bog looking away to where the river ran through purple and gold of heather and ragwort, widening white under the rays of light that shot down from behind an immense cloud. It was a scene very well worth looking upon. Far away the blue line of mountains showed dimly fair, with a promise of fine weather. There was a great sky stretching over the wide land, over-arching it, with a sense of immensity and light. At the boy's feet the gray-green of the rushes was relieved by the pale, aromatic blobs of meadow-sweet and the white of the bog-cotton that stirred in the faint, light breeze.

The bog was intersected by stretches of cultivated land. Across the Little Bog at Denys Fitzmaurice's feet he could see his father's cattle grazing the little fields, as well as other things that were not there. All sorts of strange bird-songs and calls came to him, for the bog harboured every variety of bird. His sleepy gray eyes carried an immense distance. If it had not been for the haze of heat he might have seen, as he had sometimes seen, the eagle poised motionless against the great sky over Nephin.

His hand caressed the silken head of Rory, his red setter, who lay close to him on the sunny bank. He took up one soft, feathered ear and let it drop

through his fingers. Rory would have liked better to go over the bog, racing and running before his master till he was called to heel: but he knew his master's moods and that this was a time for quietness. If a dog was tired and content to be still—they had been many miles over the bog that morning—there could be nothing better than to lie on a sunny bank half-asleep and to have one's ear played with gently by the hand one loved best in the world.

Denys too was half-asleep with his dreams, or perhaps only dazed by the shimmering haze over the bog—it was very hot—when he became aware of voices close at hand. For some reason, even before he looked in the direction of the voices, he was vaguely annoyed because the dried mud of a bog hole, into which he had slipped earlier, was plastered on his boots and his clothing. He glanced shyly over his shoulder: then stumbled to his feet. The new-comers were three. His father, Lord Leenane, and Dawn Finucane, Lord Leenane's sixteen-year-old daughter.

Denys lifted his hat, blushing all over his clear, freckled skin. He had not forgotten to be a gentleman even if the Fitzmaurices were come down in the world. His eyes, gray, lightly dappled with hazel, seemed as though they had been freckled too. His long, dark lashes, with the upward curling sweep at the end, gave his eyes a great softness. His father had said they could be as hard as agates when Denys was bent on going his own way, but usually they were full of dreams. He was tall and straight. Even though his shabby homespuns were plastered with mud and stained by the wind and weather, he looked a gentleman.

The girl, a green velvet cap on her fair hair,

which hung down in a pigtail over her emerald-green frock, looked at him with interest in her blue eyes. She had not many companions of her own age, since her only brother had been drowned in an accident on the ice three years earlier; her father, as though the loss of the boy had frightened him, would hardly let Dawn out of his sight, so that she missed school and the companionship of children of her own age. Her aunt, Mrs Metcalfe, who had lived at Castle Clogher and kept house for her widowed brother since her own widowhood, had been heard to say plaintively that Turlough's daughter must be an old maid, since her father would never allow her to leave him: or else he must find a son-in-law who would sit down by his hearth. Little Dawn had not seemed to find her father's prohibitions irksome. They were always together, riding and hunting, walking and fishing together. Dawn, in her green frock, with one little hand thrust carelessly through her father's arm, was a very pleasant sight.

It was the first time Denys Fitzmaurice had seen Lord Leenane's daughter. Castle Clogher was five miles away, with the lakes between, and Denys was one for staying at home. Lord Leenane he had seen several times when he came to buy horses from Patrick Fitzmaurice, who had come down in the world, and been reduced to making a living as best he could. The best way he knew, beyond his farming, was to breed horses. His horses, which he sold for a song, had often been lucky with their new owners. It was his pride to say that he had bred a winner of the Irish Oaks, the Irish Derby, and—crowning splendour—the Grand National. But he had not sold with judgment.

He was fond of saying that if the skies rained gold not one coin would fall into the lap of a Fitzmaurice.

'Hallo!' said Leenane, in a loud jolly voice. He had been the jolliest man in the West before his son's death, and he still kept a manner of jollity, although people said the heart had gone out of it as the colour went out of his face when the news came that Maurice was drowned and had never altogether returned to it.

'Hallo!' he shouted to Denys, who was blinking in the sun or the radiance of Dawn's face and hair. 'The last time I saw you, you were sitting on the sunny side of the ditch, just as you are sitting to-day. Did you ever move out of it since?'

Denys blushed, for the straight regard of Dawn's serious eyes rather than for Lord Leenane's jocosity.

'I did, now and again,' he said sheepishly.

'He's very good with the horses,' his father said, apologetically. 'And he has an eye for a bullock. But it's true that he idles a deal. His schoolmaster, Peter Reddy, used to say that he could get him to do only what he wanted to do. "Buy him a penny whistle," he said, "and let him play tunes on it all day long like a fairy piper. He'll never get into Sixth Book," he said.'

'He mustn't grow up a dreamer and idler,' said Leenane, and suddenly choked. He was remembering the promise of his own boy, who had been a Winchester scholar and had great things prophesied of his future. Leenane never knew how his son came to be so brilliant. He himself had not been one for books, and he had managed to get along very well without them. He used sometimes to produce a bundle of his Eton birches, dusty and tied up with faded blue ribbon, to

show what a dunce he had been. But Maurice had taken after his mother's family and bade fair to be a brilliant classical scholar. The sight of Denys Fitzmaurice, shapely and beautiful in his rough clothes, had reminded Leenane sharply of his loss. A pity the boy had had no better chance than the National School. Leenane had a vague wish that he might have done something for this boy, for Maurice's sake, but it was too late now; and perhaps Fitzmaurice would not have taken a favour. The Fitzmaurices were gentlefolk even if they had come down in the world. One had only to look at the boy to see it. And his name, Denys, stood in proof of his Norman ancestry and that the Fitzmaurices had not forgotten it.

He had a certain compunction for the colour that surged into Denys's face and ebbed away when his idleness was talked of. He put his grief from him impatiently. When would he cease to feel the stab through his heart that came for other boys alive and beautiful, while his lay dead and mouldering in earth?

'What were you thinking of when we came up behind you?' he asked in a gentler voice. 'You were lost in your thoughts. Never mind about the Sixth Book. Many a one has done well in the world without too much book learning. A penny for your thoughts, boy.'

'I was thinking about draining the bog, the Little Bog, I mean. I saw cattle grazing there and houses and people on it. If the river was to be widened and trenches cut, the water would run away. This bit is more marsh than bog. The bog begins at the little trees out there with their feet in the water.'

Leenane stared.

'I don't agree with Mr Reddy,' he said, turning to

Patrick Fitzmaurice. 'The boy's dreams are fine dreams, dreams of doing. Let us see if he can drain the bog. Do you hear, Dawn? Denys Fitzmaurice thinks he can drain the bog, and bring the cattle and the houses and the people. Isn't it a fine dream?'

'I should like to see him do it,' said Dawn. 'Would the flowers go then and the bog-cotton and the little blue butterflies, like bits of sky? The bog is a lovely place.'

'There'll be plenty of it left,' said Leenane. 'This would be a nice strip if only it was reclaimed—as far as the little trees with their feet in the water.'

'Oh, yes, please, do make a field of this little bit,' cried Dawn.

'I'll try to,' said Denys, very straight, and his eyes like agates.

Then they went to see the horses.

There was a beautiful one to see, a two-year-old filly that would make a lovely mount for Dawn a little later, but she was, as yet, unbroken.

'Not that she needs breaking,' said Denys, with the filly's silken nose pressed hard into his breast. 'She has a little mouth like satin, and there was never as sweet a temper. Only she's a terrible pet. She'd walk up the walls of the loose-box to follow me, and many's the time I've to take my tea in the box with her when she can't have Timmie Daly that she likes second-best to me.'

'Do you hear that, Dawn?' Lord Leenane asked again. 'You'll have to take your tea in this lady's loose-box unless you can find her a groom she will like nearly as well as you.'

'I should love to have tea with her,' said Dawn. 'It

would be much nicer than tea in a drawing-room with silly ladies talking about clothes and servants.'

Lord Leenane and his household were moving away for the winter. Lady, as the little filly was called, was bought, but to Denys Fitzmaurice's great relief, left at Murrough till they came back—he could never bear parting with the horses—and they were not to return till the following spring, so Lady would be his for a long time yet; but the winter passed quickly, for Denys was very busy.

Dawn and her father and Mrs Metcalfe had wintered in Rome, and returned home in the early part of May. The eight months had made a great change in Dawn. She was no longer a child. Her little figure had rounded and taken shape. She was going to miss the awkward age of girlhood. She had sprung up and had a delicate slenderness. She had a long, beautiful neck that carried her little head in very stately fashion.

'Dawn is going to be very pretty,' Mrs Metcalfe had said to Lord Leenane. 'You will have to find her a husband who will sit down in your house with your girl, Turlough.'

'It will be time enough to talk about such things ten years hence,' said Leenane huffily.

They were not long home before Leenane and Dawn rode across the hills to where the Murrough Farm sat under the lee of a green hill. It was a delightful little house, long, low, and white, with all manner of quaintness in its dim little rooms. They had called it Murrough from the old, ruined castle of the Fitzmaurice's, roofless now, and a place of four square walls with a few fine window spaces to show what it had been, and a winding staircase that led from one tiny room to

another. Sheep had grazed between the four walls of the house before Stephen Fitzmaurice, Denys's grandfather, had enclosed it.

Half-way down the hill-side Leenane pulled up so suddenly that the mare he was riding almost backed into Dawn's little horse, making him jump about a little, but not with the least intention of unseating his young mistress. He, too, had been bred at Murrough Farm, and although he had accepted Dawn with his whole heart as the one to whom he owed devotion, he had yet been showing a lively interest, sniffing the air and whinnying from the time he began to ascend by the long, leisurely road that climbed to the gap from the lakes.

'Hallo!' Leenane said, and pointed excitedly with his whip. 'Do you see that, Dawn?'

Dawn looked, having got the little horse under control. She saw nothing unusual for a moment or two. There was the thatched roof, neatly wattled over in a criss-cross pattern. There was the garden around the house dappled with colour at this distance, and the little fields with the moving dots of the sheep and cattle. There was the row of little trees with their feet in the water, and the Whispering Wood beyond.

'What is it, papa?' she asked; and then she saw. On the near side of the row of trees that stood with their feet in the water, blobs of creamy white were moving about on an emerald pasture—sheep.

'By Heavens!' said Leenane. 'The boy has drained the bog. I never thought he could do it. I thought he was only dreaming when he talked of such a thing. Better than a penny whistle, eh, Dawn? and there is the man himself.'

They cantered down the hill-side to Murrough. It was true that Denys had drained the bit of bog, by hard manual labour, by making trenches with the spade, deepening and widening the channels that already existed so that the water could escape. He looked browner and harder than when he had dreamed on the side of the ditch in the late summer weather, playing with Rory's silken ears, but his eyes had still the quietness of dreams in them.

Patrick Fitzmaurice stood by while his son was praised by Lord Leenane, wearing a well-pleased but not over-pleased air.

'I always knew it was in him,' he said. 'It was great impudence for that Reddy to say Denys was only good for playing a penny whistle. Give me an old pedagogue for impudence. Time was he'd have come hat in hand to a Fitzmaurice of Murrough. We were protecting him and his likes in the old days before we were brought down by reason of the religion. I was never sorry for it.'

'While *my* ancestor made the best of this world, lest there should be no other,' said Leenane, with a wheezy chuckle. 'Well, well, I'm not sorry he did. Castle Clogher was worth a few old prayers, as he said. But this boy of yours, Fitzmaurice of Murrough—he should have a chance—a boy of his breeding. It was damned rotten luck he should have gone to the National School with the sons of peasants. Not that it has hurt him. I read somewhere the other day that Sir William Napier, the historian, and his brother, all great soldiers, went to the village school. They had the blood of kings. I dare say many a fine fellow did the same. I expect you can do your sums, Denys. More

than I can after five years at Eton. How old is he, Fitzmaurice?’

‘Seventeen.’

‘Time enough to do something with him. I’ll see to it. Not such schooling as will wean him away from this—your one son.’

He waved his hand round the low room, lit dimly by four little windows of eight panes set deeply in the thick walls. Roses and honeysuckle looked in at the window in full summer. Now there was yellow jessamine and the hardy Scotch roses. A little gravel path ran round the house, under the windows, and the thatch above was tunnelled with the nests of starlings and house-martins. The house sat in a garden, a lovable garden of mixed fruit and vegetables, with flower-borders within the box.

The room was very pleasant although littered with the belongings of two male persons. They were not ugly belongings, tall Dawn reflected, remembering with a fastidious inward shudder a visit she had paid to an English farm-house where the greasy collar and tie of the farmer had lain on the window-seat among the roses and honeysuckle. Books, pipes, fishing-tackle, a couple of bits polished to brightness, a pen-knife, a lantern had intruded into the room which Denys’s mother had called the parlour. Her china still gleamed out of diamond-paned cupboards either side of the fireplace. The furniture was old and good. There were a couple of portraits on the longest stretch of wall. A needlework picture of Daniel in the Lion’s Den attracted Dawn by the glitter of the lion’s yellow eyes, which were in bead-work. There was a little bookcase with a green silk curtain half-drawn over the

contents. The carpet and curtains were faded but still good.

A delightful room Dawn thought it, with the wood-fire talking to itself through its spirts of flame, and Rory lying on his side on the hearth-rug.

Her father was discussing his plans for Denys's schooling. He had an old friend in Norfolk who had given up an Oxford Fellowship for a quiet country rectory. Pollock would be delighted to get a boy like Denys to coach. After a year with Pollock, Denys could go to school. He named a public school which had arrived at the democratic spirit. Leenane knew the head master, a crank politically, but a good head-master and a sound scholar.

'It will be hard on you,' he said, with a hand on Patrick Fitzmaurice's shoulder. 'I know what it will cost you—your one boy. But it is worth it; and he will come back.'

He turned away his head. Dawn Finucane was delighted with her father's plan for Denys, of whom she thought as 'a very nice boy.' She smiled at Denys, and he blinked as though he had looked into the sun, and was half-blinded by it; the colour flooded his candid face. So Dawn Finucane took possession of Denys Fitzmaurice's heart.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW AGENT

DENYS FITZMAURICE, at twenty-three, had abundantly justified Lord Leenane's interest in him. He had done well at school after his year with Mr Pollock. His education had cost very little. He had taken many scholarships and prizes, and had finally won a travelling studentship for three years at a continental university.

As he stood up with his back to the fire, looking down the long drawing-room of Castle Clogher, between the glittering lines of the chandeliers, he was a very goodly youth to look upon. So thought Lord Leenane, coming towards him with an outstretched hand and a hearty welcome on his lips. Not so often nor so sharply now did the thought of his dead son stab him: yet there was something of a film on his eyes as he looked at the tall young figure with its air of distinction.

'I have been telling Mr Fitzmaurice that we are most unpunctual people in this house, Turlough,' said Mrs Metcalfe, who was sitting by the fire, her quick knitting-needles catching the sparkle of the drops of the chandeliers as they flew to and fro. 'Even dinner is a movable feast with us.'

'Oh, Denys won't mind. I dare say he's very glad to get back to Irish ways,' Leenane said, wringing Denys's hand hard. The film was clearing off. After all he did not grudge the boy his health and good looks,

because Maurice had been dead for a sufficient number of years to have passed out of other people's thoughts and talk. If any one remembered to talk of Maurice now it was in an ordinary way without the lowered voice of sympathy. So much the better, thought the father. Maurice was more his own now when other people had forgotten him.

'Why didn't your father come? A deuced unsociable fellow!' said Leenane, in his hearty voice. The film had quite cleared away by this time.

'He likes his dinner in the middle of the day still,' Denys answered. 'He says it suits his work best. I've been leaving too much to him. He has aged without me. Going off to fairs at four in the morning, and he with a young strong son to lift his burdens! I shall relieve him of all that. He looks wonderfully better since I've come.'

'You think you'll stay with him? There won't be much at Murrough to interest you.'

Leenane was feeling somewhat dismayed. Was all the result of Denys's fine doings that he should come back to pull what remained of Murrough property out of the bog. It was not good enough for Denys, with his record of scholarship.

'I could not leave him alone,' Denys answered simply.

'Ah, you are right, you are right,' Leenane said hastily, and added: 'After all, I have Dawn,' without further explanation of his thoughts.

Mrs Metcalfe clicked away busily with her needles. Never was such a placid person. Her placidity amused and sometimes gently irritated her brother, who was very fond of her. She had theories founded on an unwavering faith in the One who ruled the World.

Nothing ever happened amiss, however it might seem so, if one trusted Him. A deal of trouble in the world came from people not being content to trust Him. When something much desired came to naught Mrs Metcalfe immediately discovered, if she possibly could, the most wonderful reason for the disappointment that turned it into a kindness. If she could discover no reason, she just trusted.

Somewhere at the back of his mind Leenane was comforted by what he called Sophie's fatalism.

'I couldn't have stuck it,' he had said, 'if she had not arrived at it through her own trouble. Dick Metcalfe, the straightest rider I ever knew, broke his neck at the big jump at Punchestown. Her two children died in the same week from scarlet fever. She says that people always die at the most merciful moment for them. I asked her what about suicides. She said they took it out of God's hands and reminded me that—

'Betwixt the saddle and the ground
Was Mercy sought and Mercy found.

It suits Sophie, that comfortable belief of hers. She'll never see fifty again and she has the skin and the eyes of a child.'

Dawn came up the long room, between the mirrors, under the glittering chandeliers, her golden head rising from a green silk frock, all billowy softness, like a snow-drop from its sheath. Something passed over Denys Fitzmaurice's face—a quiver: he lifted his hand to his eyes as though he were dazzled. Leenane noticed the gesture and was pleased with the homage to his girl's beauty.

Something was stirring in his mind. He kept Denys unusually long in the dining-room after the ladies had left, pushing the decanter of port wine towards him along the polished table, which reflected the wines and fruits richly, as though it was going to be a lengthy sitting.

'All this looks very well, Denys,' he said, indicating by a wave of the hand the table with its beautiful silver and glass, the pictures on the wall, the sideboard with its burden of old silver, its golden tores and collars dug from the bog, the gold box which contained Elizabeth's charter handing over Clogher to the Queen's Finucane, and dispossessing the recusant Finucane. Only in Ireland would such treasures have been openly, even carelessly, displayed.

'It does, Lord Leenane,' Denys answered, and wondered what was coming.

'All sham and show,' went on Leenane, 'glitter and nothing behind it. It isn't mine. I'm in the hands of the Jews. I am going to sell all the stuff I can get rid of. Cecil's box should fetch a pretty bit of money, to say nothing of the Queen's autograph.'

'I am very sorry,' said Denys, feeling the inadequacy of the remark. 'I did not know.'

'So am I—damnably sorry. So will Dawn be when she knows: she loves the place. We can't keep it up. The Brothers of St Gall want it for a novitiate. Comical that! You remember the hooks in the cellars below where they used to hang the priests' heads in the Penal Days till the official came down from Dublin Castle to verify the bag before he paid the hunter! I'm not proud of my ancestor who made this old house the centre of such traffic.'

'It was the spirit of the times,' said Denys, 'and after all it was an ancestress of yours who put an end to it and sheltered the last victim of the priest-hunter, defying all the world to take him from her.'

'Yes, yes; she was a Blake of Galway, and the Blakes never break their word. She had promised the priest safety. I hope Lady Sabina will blot out her husband's stain. But—good Lord, what a vengeance for the Church to slip into the seat of the Finucanes! They will make a chapel of the cellars, you'll see. I don't care. It will be better than letting some farmer have it who would tear out all the beautiful things and sell them, and store potatoes in my wife's drawing-room.'

He was silent for a second during which Denys looked the sympathy he did not speak. If the Finucanes were to be gone from Castle Clogher his own sacrifice to filial duty would be harder than he had expected. Not that he repented it.

'After all,' Lord Leenane went on, 'I've no son. It would be worse if I had a son. We'll go travelling, Dawn and I, if the money runs to it; if not, when the debts are all paid, it will be Bath or Cheltenham, or maybe Tunbridge Wells. Some tabby-place anyhow. I'll end my life as a tom-cat, or a tame cat, among the old women and the parsons.'

There was a note of anguish in his voice at the prospect before him which made Denys smile, although he felt serious enough.

'How will Miss Finucane like it?' he asked quietly.

'Oh, Dawn! She'll loathe it, poor child, and she'll shock the tabbies. She adores this place. I'll keep a *bied-à-terre* for her. There is that long low house on

the edge of Cloona Lake that the doctor died out of the other day. It has a pretty garden. I shan't part with more of the land than I can help—not at present at least. I have my responsibilities towards the people.'

He lifted his head with a gesture that revealed him as a man proud of his responsibilities. If the Finucanes *had* got dipped, their tenants had not suffered for it. They kept up the traditions of good landlordism even when all the conditions had changed.

'I'll tell you what, Denys,' he broke out suddenly. 'There won't be enough for you to do at Murrough. Take my agency, such as it is. It's been to let since old Valentine died. If I go travelling I shan't want to be bothered with the affairs of what is left of the estate. There'll be something for you in it, though it won't be what it used to be.'

'There are resources on the estate,' said Denys gravely. His heart was beating fast, but he did not betray the elation he felt.

'Not minerals. I've been after that *ignis fatuus* long enough.'

'Not necessarily minerals. The whole country is lying fallow—money wasted everywhere.'

Once again Denys's eyes were full of dreams. Once again he saw people and houses and cattle in the barren places. His father had said that he had the second sight, that he inherited it from his mother. Denys would like to think he had the second sight. Then his dreams need not come to naught. His dreams had great power over him. He came back to realities and heard Lord Leenane chuckle.

'There you are!' he said. 'You remember when you drained the Little Bog and made me your friend for

life. You've no money of mine to play with. That's certain. All such playthings ask for money.'

'I know. The money will come.'

Denys lifted his eyes under the curling lashes and directed a long, slow, considering glance at Lord Leenane.

'I accept the agency,' he said. 'I owe you everything. There is nothing I wouldn't do for you, except the things you would not ask me to do. Keep as much of the property as you can; you won't be sorry in the long run.'

'I shall keep all I can. It is selling men, women, and children. Not that things are as they once were. But the people are fond of me. I'd never be hard on them. We'll see what the house and furniture will fetch. I owe Aarons two thousand pounds and it's increasing like a rolling snowball. I must pay him. It's nothing for a man in my position, but, good Lord, where am I to lay my hand on two thousand pounds?

'How much did you borrow originally?'

'Twelve hundred. I've no complaint of Aarons. He is a gentleman in comparison with most of the others. He takes risks. I must pay him.'

'He is your most pressing creditor?'

It was a chance shot, but it went home. Leenane burst into a shout of laughter.

'I don't know how you knew,' he said. 'The others will wait. Simon Aarons, they say, often saves a client from ruin by making him pay up. You see, it's the infernal snowball.'

'I suppose we shall have to sell,' Denys said sorrowfully. 'I wish we could have saved the place—for your daughter. Couldn't we sell something—a residue

of furniture, as they say in the auctioneers' advertisements, and keep the place?'

'What's the good of that? I've nothing left to go on with. I'll want an income even if I go tabbying.'

'You must tell me exactly how you stand if I am to help,' said Denys.

'Oh, I'll tell you fast enough. I stand damned badly. I'm afraid we're past praying for.'

Leenane smiled to himself at something of the peremptory in Denys's tone. The situation was changed since the day he had found Denys, his eyes full of dreams, staring out over the Little Bog, while the silky ear of Rory the setter, ageing and rheumatic now, dropped through his fingers.

He was tickled at the idea of Denys taking the reins so easily and confidently. Denys Fitzmaurice, the son of old Pat, who had come down to be just a small farmer and horse breeder, if he *was* a Fitzmaurice of Murrough! It was only in this country where pedigrees counted that Fitzmaurice would have been held in any consideration. So many generations of the Fitzmaurices had been farmers that their past glories might well be forgotten. There was the gaunt tower of Murrough. And—yes—the Fitzmaurices had a death-warning—not like the Finucane banshee, who cried in the night when a death was about to take place in the family—but a white hare that crossed the path of the Fitzmaurices, running under their feet in some gloaming. Many a peasant had seen the White Hare of the Fitzmaurices. In some respects it was a better authenticated ghost than the Finucane banshee.

Lord Leenane was thinking half-whimsically. A spasm twisted his face ever so slightly when the swiftly

flowing thoughts rested a second on the vision of Castle Clogher, the big comfortable house, as a ruined pile, open to the wind and weather as Murrough had been these seventy years back.

'You've strong young shoulders to take on my ruinous affairs, Denys,' he said, his face still wry from the bitter thought. 'I'd have been more careful maybe, or more lucky, if Maurice had lived. Never mind about Dawn. She will be happy at the Little House when we want a change from the tabbies. I'd rather this place went if I couldn't keep it up with dignity.'

They sat so long in the dining-room that Dawn was a little vexed about it. It was so lonely in the big drawing-room, where her aunt sat reading and knitting by the light of a shaded lamp. Dawn was interested in Denys Fitzmaurice, who had drained the Little Bog and made a green field as far as the trees that stood with their feet in the water, under the sky of immense white clouds piled upon indigo blue. When they came at last there was only time to say good-night. Somewhat to Dawn's chagrin Denys Fitzmaurice seemed in a hurry to be gone.

He stayed up into the small hours talking with his father. The magnitude of the thing he proposed took Patrick Fitzmaurice's breath away. It was no less than that Denys should have at his disposal to do what he would with, and at once, the sum of two thousand pounds.

'It will make a big hole in what has taken so many years to put together, lad,' he said: but he had no intention of refusing.

'I will give it back to you and more,' Denys answered.

'Was I complainin' for myself? Isn't it for you I was gatherin' it?'

But he did not say the thing could not be done. Like many an Irish farmer, he had invested little. There was a large sum of money on deposit in the bank. There was security for what remained. Patrick Fitzmaurice was well pleased that his son should be Lord Leenane's agent. What if the Finucanes *were* treading the path the Fitzmaurices had trodden before them, coming down in the world? The agent was often a better born man than his employer. And Leenane had done handsomely by the boy, and now the boy could repay it. Heaven alone knew what ambitious dreams began to dazzle before Patrick Fitzmaurice's eyes for the future of his family, restored to the old estate.

A few days later Denys Fitzmaurice left Murrough with a cheque for two thousand pounds in his pocket-book and without saying good-bye to his new employer.

CHAPTER III

MRS AARONS

MR AARONS lived in a stately Queen Anne house in a quiet *cul-de-sac* of West End London. Nothing could have looked less like a money-lender's establishment than the porticoed door, the freshly-curtained windows, stirred by the west wind, the polished brass of the handle and door-knocker; to say nothing of the staid respectability of the man-servant who admitted Denys Fitzmaurice, some two days after that dinner at Castle Clogher, to a square hall, paved in diamonds of black and white marble, flooded with light from an arched window at the head of the great staircase.

The first thing that struck Denys was the strange silence of the house. The sharp tapping of a typewriter somewhere near by only served to accentuate it. Scarcely a hundred yards away was a roaring artery of London. One might have been 'lapped in lead' so utterly had the rumble of the traffic ceased. There was a fresh country smell, due to the bowls of wall-flowers and pitchers of lilac that stood on onyx and buhl tables. It might have been a country house set deep in gardens and fields.

Denys waited in a little round room of many doors, the walls of which were frescoed with female heads set in wreaths. He admired absently the old mahogany doors, deep set, and the architraves above them. The

ceiling of the many-doored room was very ornate. There were books and magazines on a table within reach of the comfortable chairs. It might have been the waiting-room of a fashionable doctor.

Presently the door opened, and there entered a remarkably handsome man. Velasquez might have painted Mr Simon Aarons. He claimed to have come of Spanish Jews and the golden olive of his complexion had no touch of dinginess in it. His eyes were piercingly bright; his gray hair had a gracious wave; his aquiline features were not too marked. As he sat in the high-backed chair, facing his visitor, Denys Fitzmaurice became aware that the long-fingered hand hanging negligently over the knob of the chair-arm had been carefully manicured. He said to himself that there was a certain nobility in the finely shaped head, and that the fingers were more imaginative than acquisitive.

'I came in reference to Lord Leenane's debt to you, Mr Aarons,' he began, without preliminary.

'You come from his lordship?'

The bright eyes roamed over Denys Fitzmaurice, seeming to take him in, to appraise him from head to foot.

'I am his lordship's agent. He has appointed me to manage his Irish property.'

'Ah, that will not be a very difficult matter,' said Mr Aarons, and smiled. His voice was the Jewish voice, but less thick than in most of his compatriots, and with notes of music in it.

'I mean to pull some of it out of the fire for him,' said Denys, with a slight sense of annoyance.

'Why?'

It was an unexpected and surprising question. It surprised Denys with a sudden knowledge that one element in his desire and determination to save Lord Leenane from the result of his own thriftlessness—the element that gave his resolve something of a passion—was that Dawn Finucane should not lose the home she loved. He coloured hotly, not so much because Mr Aarons had put a leading question as that he had discovered his own hidden motive. He was vexed with himself. Was not gratitude for all that had been done for him a sufficient motive?

‘Lord Leenane has a daughter, I believe?’

Again Denys coloured. He answered stiffly that Lord Leenane had a daughter; he had lost his only son.

‘Ach, that was bad, to lose his only son. But would Mr ——’—he glanced at the card on the table before him—‘Fitzmaurice, be good enough to say how he, Mr Aarons, could oblige him?’

‘I want to know how much you’ll take off the debt,’ said Denys bluntly.

‘Take off the debt!’

Mr Aarons looked horrified.

‘But that is not the way we do business, young man. I am not a philanthropic character nor a public benefactor.’

‘I don’t know. I’ve heard some queer things told of you.’

Mr Aarons began to chuckle, and the Jew came out in his face.

‘Ach, queer?’ he said. ‘And what might you call queer? I dare say there are queer stories. People come to me ready to pay anything for the use of my money.’

They think not to stick to their bargains. They cry out that they have been robbed.'

'Not queer things of that sort—the other sort, rather. I have heard romantic stories of generous things you have done, debts you have forgone.'

'You ask me to forgo the proper interest on Lord Leenane's debt to me?'

The golden olive face was suddenly furrowed with lines of cunning suspicion.

'On the contrary, I am prepared to pay the debt in full.

'Ach, you are prepared to pay me in full. Then why did you not say so? You have lent this money to Lord Leenane. I tell you, you will lose it. He is a bottomless pit. Why should you lose your money in a bottomless pit?'

'You are pressing him. Is not that a reason why we should pay off the debt?'

'It is business. I have nothing to do with pressing him. It is the routine of my office. Better for him to pay, if he has to sell out. He has not paid me my interest.'

'He is going to sell out. That is what I want to prevent. I will tell you, Mr Aarons. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Lord Leenane. I shall explain.'

He told simply what Lord Leenane had done for him, while Mr Aarons listened attentively.

'And so,' he concluded, 'I want to do my best to pull him out of his difficulties. I owe it to him, and to myself. You say he is a bottomless pit. I do not believe it. He has not lost his money in any of the usual discreditable ways. He has made bad investments and has lost heavily. He has been too

generous to his friends in misfortune. He has been too easy with his tenants—a good fault where many are too hard. He had not so much to make away with. The Finucanes are poor, ruined by the too-lavish good-nature of the eighteenth century. He has no head for business. I shall be by his side. The minerals are there, though he lost his money looking for them. He talks of ending his days at Bath or Cheltenham or perhaps Tunbridge Wells. He would not be able to breathe in such places. He has had a free, open-air life among his own people. They were fond of him even when they paid him no rent. The stuffiness would kill him in a year.’

There was something of a passionate pleading in the speech.

There came a tap at the door and the respectable man-servant came in with a card on a tray. Mr Aarons glanced at it.

‘You can show his lordship in here,’ he said. Then he waved Denys towards the door, following him with a shepherding air.

‘You shall talk to Rachel,’ he said, ‘to my wife, Mrs Simon Aarons. I will see you again. It is she does the romantic, foolish things that give my business a bad name. You do not suppose all this’—he waved his hand around the hall through which they were passing—‘was got by romance. No.’

He opened a door and allowed Denys to precede him. The room they entered was a very large room, and seemed larger because it was panelled in white wood. Denys saw that it was full of beautiful things, or rather that the things it contained were all beautiful. The windows had been thrown up from the bottom giving

a glimpse of garden-beds outside full of gay flowers, and a distant line of poplars not yet robbed of their first heavenly green. The fragrance and freshness, as of a country morning, in the room seemed to gather about the lady, no longer very young, who sat by a table, writing. She turned around: then stood up and came to meet them. Denys judged her to be somewhere in the forties. She was beautiful, although youth and she had parted company. She had placid broad brows and large, quiet gray eyes. Her lips had a curious sweetness. Something of benignity flowed from her presence as at her husband's introduction she smiled at Denys.

'You will talk to Mr Fitzmaurice, Rachel,' Mr Aarons said. 'If he is not in too great a hurry you will persuade him to spend the week-end at Homewood. He is impetuous. He will do business in a single minute. It is not my way. A business like mine moves slowly. I must have time to think.'

He went off leaving Denys to Mrs Aarons. He felt pleased at being left to Mrs Aarons. She went over and stirred the fire. He had not noticed that there was a fire, but there was a touch of east wind in the April morning and with the open windows the fire was pleasant.

'Now,' she said, in a full, rich voice. 'You shall sit down and talk to me. I hope you have not come to borrow money from my husband. It is a bad way to begin.'

He sat down obediently, facing her at the other side of the fireplace. A little fox terrier got down from a sofa and came to make friends with him. He lifted the dog to his knee. The circumstances were so amazing,

so unexpected, that he did not know how to answer her for a second or two.

‘Ah,’ he said, after a slight pause. ‘It is you who do all the kind things. That explains it.’

‘You have heard of us,’ she said, and smiled. Her eyes were soft as velvet and deep as night. She seemed enveloped in the most wonderful softness. Her gray dress of some fine woollen material, held with a girdle of blue stones, set in dull silver, suggested a softness all its own. As she leant forward with her reassuring smile, it was as though she might offer Denys a motherly caress. The fine pearl ear-rings swung in her ears and showed up against the richly-tinted olive of her neck and cheek.

‘Oh, but you are wrong,’ she said. ‘Simon Aarons is a very good man. He is a just man. The people of our race make a hard bargain, but they observe it. Sometimes, if the bargain presses too hardly or some one is young and foolish, Simon puts it into my hands to release him or the other one. It is not I who do it. It is Simon who gives me the power. He is the ultimate tribunal. I may make mistakes’—a shadow passed across the deep wells of her eyes as though a cloud moved above water—‘it is not often that happens, nor that my husband says to me: “Rachel, you have been misled, my woman. I stick to my bargain.” It all rests with him. He lets it pass through my hands. And now—what have you to tell me?’

She seemed to Denys a wonderful woman, and as he looked at her he remembered the great women of her race, and said to himself that she was fit to sit down among them. There was genius in her kindness, in her air of gentle command, her enveloping motherliness.

Her gaze at him was so benign that he felt as though a mild sun had come out and was shining on him.

‘Go on,’ she commanded. ‘Tell it to me from the beginning—straight through. Then I shall see if I can help.’

As though impelled, Denys began far back with the Fitzmaurices of Murrough, and how they had become impoverished for the faith that was in them. At that she nodded her head softly and her long finger-tips met each other: her eyes looked at him with a spiritual understanding. He told how the Fitzmaurices had come down to a little bog farm while the Finucanes held their territories: how the Castle of Murrough stood up gaunt and roofless against the sky: how Lord Leenane had come that day long ago and bidden him jestingly to drain the Little Bog: how he had done it and it had become fruitful earth, as far as the trees that stood with their feet in the water. Of Dawn’s share in the enterprise he said nothing, barely mentioning that she came with her father that day. Then he went on to tell what Leenane had done for him, and how he had returned home with the precious gift of education to find his friend and benefactor ruined. Finally he mentioned that he had two thousand pounds to offer as payment in full of Lord Leenane’s debt to Mr Aarons, adding that he hoped Mr Aarons would see his way to reduce his rate of interest.

‘We want time,’ he said, blushing ingenuously, ‘and we want some money to go on with. There will be the rents in September. There are lots of things to be done with the estate if only we had time and some money to work it. There are acres of timber, the trees strangling each other for breath. There are salmon in

the river which are poached, and quantities of game. They even shoot the salmon. I would hang a man who shot a salmon. There are minerals. Lord Leenane has dropped a deal of money over them, because he fell into the hands of unscrupulous prospectors who want to buy the mineral rights for a song. There is turf—miles of it. A good drainage scheme would give him miles of arable and pasture land which is now marsh. You could do anything with the water-power of the rivers.'

His eyes saw visions and dreamed dreams. For the moment he was far away from her.

'It is your own money,' she said softly.

He started and stammered with the air of one who has been sharply pulled up.

'My father had it lying by,' he said. 'They *will* put money in the Irish banks on deposit receipt.'

'And the young lady is very charming?' Mrs Aarons went on, in a voice soft as silk.

'Yes, she is very charming.'

'Ah, I understand now, and I can lay the case before my husband. He will probably not decide at once. He has asked you to spend the week-end with us at Homewood. I hope you will say yes.

He had wanted to get back as quickly as possible, but, of course, he had to wait for a decision. Something in her manner told him that the decision would not be made this side of the week-end.

'My husband takes his time,' she said, as though she understood his thoughts. 'Will you lunch, with us and, if you have not much to do and do not know London very well, I could take you somewhere; There are some things of our own I should like to show you.'

‘Thank you,’ said Denys gratefully. ‘I shall stay with very great pleasure.’

After all, it was a wonderful adventure. While they waited the luncheon hour Mrs Aarons played to him on the great organ, which occupied one end of the music-room that opened off the drawing-room. When she played, still more when she sang, she was inspired. Denys, watching her, fascinated by her, forgot her gray hairs and the gracious amplitude of her figure. The beauty of early maturity had come back to her with the music.

He was surprised at the magnificence of her voice until she enlightened him. While he thanked her with glowing eyes, she said :—

‘I am growing old and my voice grows old with me. You are too young to have heard me in the great days, when I was Alba, but you may have heard my name.’

He had heard her name. The greatness of it still lingered. So she was Alba—and married to the Jew money-lender almost as famous in his way as she in hers ! It was indeed an adventure.

The expression of his eyes pleased her. She laughed and said :—

‘You can now say that Alba gave you a concert all to yourself.’

CHAPTER IV

THE OTHER MAN

THERE was another guest at the luncheon table, for whom Denys conceived at first sight a very definite dislike. He was evidently a soldier, although in mufti, and he came in with the air of one belonging to the house rather than an invited guest.

‘Ah, Hilary!’ said Mrs Aarons, when they found the young man seated in the drawing-room on their return from the music-room. They were facing a round mirror in a splendid Venetian frame, and by chance Denys caught a glimpse of his hostess’s face, the light full on it from the open windows. She was looking with real tenderness on the young man, who had been reading an early edition of an evening paper while the music went on a few feet away. ‘This is kind, Hilary,’ she said. ‘So kind to come to see me.’

The young man she had called Hilary took her hand and bent over it, with what Denys described mentally as a dancing master’s deference. The hand was worth kissing, if it was only for the beauty of its rings: a black pearl of great price on one finger, a pink pearl on the other. Mrs Aarons drew her hand away with the air of a shy young girl as she introduced them.

‘Captain Arundel—Mr Fitzmaurice.’

Captain Arundel certainly seemed very much at

home. He was a rather small, neat young man, handsome of his kind, and with a certain aristocratic air, worthy of a guardsman—a Coldstreamer.

Denys detested at first sight his blue, chilly eyes, the little golden moustache and sleek golden head, the pinkish face, the perfection of his figure in the well-cut clothes, his slow, rather insolent voice.

But Mrs Aarons seemed to find nothing amiss with Captain Arundel. Simon Aarons came to the luncheon-table, ate sparingly of a very simple dish, drank a glass of water, and went away. He had said little and seemed preoccupied while he stayed.

Captain Arundel talked a good deal about people of whom Denys knew nothing, and things in which he was little interested; he talked with a certain cleverness, interspersed with bursts of thin laughter in which Mrs Aarons joined with a merriment that added to her new aspect of youth in Denys's eyes. While she looked at and talked to this fop, this coxcomb, this 'mere white curd of ass's milk,' as Denys called him irascibly in his own mind, the girl she had been came back and looked out of her eyes and her smile.

Denys was silent, if not well content to listen. He was fascinated by Mrs Aarons and amazed at the strangeness of her evident affection for Captain Arundel and pleasure in his society.

After a time she made an effort to draw him into the conversation, while Captain Arundel hesitated over his choice of the wines, which Denys noticed were always set before him by the butler, as though it was he whose tastes were to be consulted. She asked some question about life in the West of Ireland, as though she was very much interested.

Captain Arundel chose his wine and turned to Denys with a new but still languid interest.

'Oh,' he said; 'you come from that bog-land! What part?'

'Castletown-Erris.'

'Do you know the Leenanes?'

Denys set his face like steel so that he should betray nothing—he had not lost the schoolboy habit of colouring easily—but he thought he had failed when he saw, or fancied he saw, a look of cool amusement in Arundel's eyes.

'I am acting as Lord Leenane's agent,' he said icily.

'Ah! quite a coincidence! I met him and his daughter in Scotland last autumn. A jolly little girl, Dawn, and a good sportswoman.'

Very pointedly Denys changed the conversation, asking Mrs Aarons for the name of the painter of a small head of a boy on the opposite wall.

She looked uneasily from one to the other of the young men, as though she had discovered their antagonism, while she gave the name of the painter.

'It is very clever of you to pick it out,' she said. 'It is by the Spanish painter, Goya; it is one of the gems of our collection. My husband calls it the Golden Boy.'

Captain Arundel disappeared after lunch. He was driving a party down to Hurlingham and had not even time for a cigarette. Denys breathed more freely when he was gone. They said good-bye with stiff coldness on Denys's part, while Arundel extended the tips of his fingers with his air of chilly insolence.

When the clang of the heavy hall-door had reverberated

through the house, Mrs Aarons turned to Denys with a smile, half merry, half deprecating.

'You boys do not like each other,' she said. 'Tell me—is it Miss Dawn? Are you both among her adorers?'

'I should not presume to adore Miss Finucane,' Denys said coldly, and then felt ashamed before the kindness of the splendid dark eyes with their wonderful changing expressions.

'Ah,' she said softly, 'she might not call it presumption.'

While they drove she asked many questions about Dawn, and Denys, forgetting how Hilary Arundel had irked him, answered simply, telling more than he was aware of to his attentive listener.

They drove across the Park on their way to the South London slum, in which Mr and Mrs Aarons had built and endowed a children's hospital. There were also alms-houses after the ancient manner, an oblong of little houses, with all manner of conveniences, for the old ladies who lived there, built around a stretch of green grass, a few thorn-trees, and a fountain; another group about a central building which contained a dining-hall, billiard-room, library, and smoking-room. These were for the old men.

'We wish to do something like this for the children,' Mrs Aarons said, her eyes widening and softening. 'We adore children, although we are childless. And the old men and women, are they not children again? We shall do something for the poor women too presently, when we have time to think it out, a hospital for the mothers, perhaps. One has to be so careful and so wise when one gives.'

They returned by way of the Park, which was
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crowded; and Denys had an idea that some of the very smart men they met, as well as the ladies, regarded him with envy. Mrs Aarons had as many greetings as though she was a duchess, which she might have been indeed, as she leant back in the stately carriage behind the high-stepping horses. There was nothing smarter in the Park than the whole turn-out.

Going down on Saturday afternoon from Victoria to Homewood, Denys was not pleased to run up against Captain Arundel on the platform. They greeted each other with a curt nod and passed on, but they went down by the same train and were obliged to walk up together by the long tree-hung, climbing road, which lay between Homewood and the station. It would have been too ridiculous not to have walked together, so they made the best of it, and were engaged in apparently amicable conversation when Mrs Aarons, who had come to meet them, surrounded by a bevy of joyously-barking and leaping dogs, caught sight of them as she emerged from a shrubbery.

Denys was delighted with the beauty of Homewood, and the lovely country of woods and chalk hills, with delightful houses set down here and there amid the groves and gardens. The primroses were all out; the woods fairily blue with the opening blue-bells and full of a delicate, delicious fragrance under the boughs of green silk, fairily fine.

That evening they had music after dinner, and Mrs Aarons sang, while Hilary Arundel stood by the piano and turned the leaves of her music. On the Sunday there were many visitors, and a full table for lunch and dinner. During the afternoon Mr Aarons took Denys away from the visitors, from whom he himself seemed

glad to escape, for a walk in the woods, which were in full beauty.

He had taken off his hat and walked with it in his hand, as though he felt the breeze pleasant on his brow and hair.

It was interesting to see Mr Aarons at his country house—he seemed even more unlike Aarons the money-lender than he had been in London. He was learned in trees and wild flowers: he knew a deal about birds and had watched them, unseen, in their secret haunts, and observed them when they were not startled by the eyes of men upon them. He confessed that he would have chosen to be a country gentleman if he could have chosen his life; he would have farmed his own land, grown his own crops, and bred his own beasts.

‘I want to do it here, but I can’t,’ he said. ‘They simply won’t let me be anything else but what I am. Strange as it may seem to you, young man, it would be as bad a thing for me to retire from business as for a great doctor to give up his practice. Worse, because it would affect a greater number of people.’

He turned suddenly to Denys and flashed at him something of defiance.

‘When they tell you a moneylender has no bowels of mercy don’t believe them,’ he said; and went on to talk, his eyes down, his hands behind his back.

‘I am like Robin Hood; I take from the rich and give to the poor. My career was fixed for me before I was born. I would prefer flocks and herds rather than the breed of barren metal. If I were not a Jew I should have been a farmer. I should like to destroy the tradition that Jews do not till the earth.’

Presently he was searching the hedgerows and the

undergrowth for birds' nests, being cunning in finding even the most hidden. His long slender fingers would part the leaves ever so gently to reveal the little head of the brooding bird. He could tell when she had begun sitting, and when the young birds would come. In some of the nests were already nestlings, gaping with open beaks for what the foraging father brought them.

Suddenly Mr Aarons turned to Denys and fixed his eyes full upon him. They had a compelling force.

'Tell me,' he said, 'what do you think of Arundel?'

Denys hesitated.

'I see you don't like him,' Mr Aarons said. 'Neither do I. My wife is attached to him. We never had any children. Odd that she should like Arundel! So many pretty boys and good boys—good, even if they have played ducks and drakes with their money—come here and to Stratfield Place. They all adore my wife. She is very good to them. She likes Arundel best of all. It is very strange. You never can tell with a woman.'

They stood by the water's edge a while in silence. Tough green shoots were pushing through the earth. A little later it would be a forest of foxgloves. Through the clear brown water they could see the water-lily roots sending up their long leaves to the light.

Suddenly Mr Aarons said a strange thing. 'I do not see Hilary Arundel in the place of the boy who ought to have been ours.'

It was almost as though he had not known he had a listener. Denys did not answer him. Apparently he expected no answer, and there was nothing to say.

They had crossed a bridge between the lakes and come back, and they were in sight of the lawn, crowded

with people—through the shimmering leaves they caught glints of the gay colours of the ladies' dresses, for the Sunday was very fine and had brought down many London visitors—when Mr Aarons suddenly spoke of the business which had brought Denys to London.

They stood by a swing-gate leading from the lawns into a coppice. The path dipped sharply, so that they were out of sight. Some of the dogs left behind had discovered them and joined their fellows, who had been taken for the walk in a cheerful hunt after small game through the green uncurling fronds of the new bracken.

'I've been talking to my wife about Lord Leenane's affairs,' he said. 'I've no sympathy with him, but there's a daughter, and he helped you. Perhaps he has learned sense by now. I remit the interest. If you wish to pay me twelve hundred pounds on his behalf I will give you a clear receipt.'

'That is very generous of you,' said Denys, flushing with surprise and delight.

'Another thing—if you have any really good scheme for developing his property, I will advance what money you require at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. No wild-cat schemes, you know. My wife told me how you drained the bog. Tell me now'—he turned the conversation easily—'how many varieties of orchis have you in your part of the world? A man who has been there told me he had found five.'

'I'm afraid I don't know, sir,' said Denys.

'Ah, you should know! These things are worth studying, far better worth than the things people bother themselves about. I have a collection of plants I

intended to leave to Merton College, Oxford. If I had had a son he should have gone there. I should like to show them to you sometime. Now I am afraid we shall have missed our tea.'

The tea was over, but fresh tea was brought. Afterwards Mr Aarons disappeared within the house, and Denys, a little shy of the crowd of unknown and mainly fashionable people, wandered away towards the stables, where he was always at home. He was interested in the horses, that hung their long silken noses over the stable doors to be fondled by his hands, with a confident friendliness.

From the stable he wandered farther afield. He was in a leafy walk by the side of one of the many lakes, when a low, thin laugh reached his ear. He knew it with distaste, for Hilary Arundel's. There was something triumphant in the sound of the laughter, something cruel, to his mind.

There were two people in a little boat moored in the shadow of the trees. He had not known the lake was so near—just beyond the thin screen of the young leaves. There was a girl in a white dress and a big hat—Denys could not see her face—but Hilary Arundel was lying at full length in the bottom of the boat, his head flung back, resting against the girl's skirts. They were much too occupied with each other to discover his presence. With a sudden anger, inexplicable, save by his dislike and distrust of Hilary Arundel, he turned sharply, and walked away.

CHAPTER V

AT THE OPERA

DENYS was in London for some ten days, during which he was the guest of Mr and Mrs Aarons, before the business was settled up and the money finally paid over. Sometimes it seemed to him that Mr Aarons was deliberately slow about settling the matter, but of course that could not be.

It would have been a delightful time if he had not been so anxious to get back to Ireland. He wanted to make a clean breast of what he had been doing to Lord Leenane. Oddly enough, now that he had settled the matter very much to his own liking, he began to be a little afraid as to how Lord Leenane would take his interference. He was accustomed to an unreasonable pride in his countrymen. Would Leenane swear at him for his meddlesomeness and refuse to take the release he had obtained? A far-fetched idea, but it was quite on the cards.

He vexed himself over this contingency in his quiet moments. He had not so very many. Mrs Aarons was showing him London, with a kind thoroughness. He went everywhere. He was meeting many interesting people. She seemed to go where she would, and she carried him in her train to various great houses, where she was obviously held in honour. He heard wonderful music, wonderful talk. He saw people of whom he had

read in the newspapers. Altogether, it was a wonderful open window on Life with a large L.

At one of the smart houses, where there was a big evening party, Denys found himself sitting in a corner with a little old, great lady, whose bright eyes shone at him from amid a network of wrinkles in a tiny old parchment face. He hardly knew how he had come there. He had been standing apart from the crowd while Mrs Aarons was singing and the old lady had plucked his arm and made him sit down beside her.

'I've been looking at you,' she said, when the song ceased and the buzz of conversation broke out anew. 'You are with Rachel Aarons. You are one of her little boys.'

Denys flushed. It was a queer way of putting it, and something he was not used to. But he said the right thing, judging from the approval he saw in the old lady's face, although he spoke stiffly. 'I am very proud if I am one of Mrs Aarons's little boys.'

'That is quite prettily spoken, my dear,' she said. 'I say what I think. You mustn't mind if it seems odd. You're new to London, I can see. When you get used to us you will hear all about me—Lady Caroline Woolchester. I'm a privileged person, and say just what I please. Well, it is a very good thing to be one of Rachel Aarons's little boys.'

'Mrs Aarons is very kind to me,' said Denys, with a stiff embarrassment.

'Oh, I can see what's the matter with you. You don't like to be lumped. And perhaps you don't like to be called a little boy. But you are, you know. Just a little boy in the nursery to me. What age do you suppose I am?'

Denys glanced fearfully at the wrinkles, which were certainly very many, and was about to say that he could not possibly guess, when the old lady interrupted him.

'I know you are going to say seventy,' she said. 'And I should never have forgiven you. I am eighty-seven. I was born in the year of Waterloo. Let me think now what I was going to say. We won't get much chance of talking once people find me out. You should be very glad to be one of Rachel Aarons's little boys. She is a splendid creature. Can you tell me why she married Simon Aarons?'

'I'm afraid I can't,' said Denys.

'I didn't suppose you could. It was a sacrifice, even if they are happy together. I know for a fact that Rachel Alba could have married into the Peerage if she had wanted to. She might have gone farther and fared worse. Simon Aarons loves the ground she walks on, and she has saved his soul. He does the most ridiculous things—for a moneylender.'

'I know,' said Denys.

'H'm!' said Lady Caroline disapprovingly, 'so you've been going the pace, too! I don't know who you are; but I didn't think you looked like a fashionable young man.'

'I'm not,' said Denys, and laughed. 'And I have not been going the pace. I am just an Irish farmer and the son of an Irish farmer. I am Denys Fitzmaurice of Murrough.'

'It sounds a good name.'

'I added the "Murrough,"' said Denys honestly, 'because I like the sound of it. Murrough is only a ruin now. We have gone down in the world.'

'You'll go up again. I can see—it's your dream to rebuild Murrrough.'

Denys looked at this strange old lady in wonder.

'I don't know how you knew,' he said, 'but it is true. It is one of my dreams. I have many.'

'Don't marry some one who will have no sympathy with your dream. I know a man who had just such a dream as yours. He has moved mountains to realise it. Now that he might do it he has a fashionable English wife and half a dozen scornful children who smile at his dreams of repossessing a ruined castle in Kerry, because it happened to be the cradle of his race.

The crowd moved, broke up, and some one found Lady Caroline in her corner, a tall, distinguished-looking man, with a blue ribbon and a star on his breast.

'I have been looking everywhere for you, Lady Caroline,' he said, 'I am to have the great honour and pleasure of taking you into supper.'

'And I am extremely hungry for it,' she answered, addressing him by a name that made Denys stare reverently, 'and for your always delightful conversation.'

She placed her hand on the famous man's arm. Then she spoke behind her fan to Denys.

'I should be glad if it was you and not that fop, Arundel,' she said. 'Come and see me—94a Belgrave Gardens. Better, I'll get Rachel to bring you to dinner.'

Again Mr and Mrs Aarons went out of town for the week-end and Denys went with them. In his own mind he was impatient to return, his mission being accomplished, but the kindness was so great that he was perforce acquiescent. Still, Mr Aarons delayed to give him

his quittance and bid him go. In ways it was a very delightful holiday. The days were packed full with incident and interest, and every day his admiration and affection for Mrs Aarons grew. He had ceased to ask himself, as Lady Caroline Woolchester had asked, why she had married Mr Aarons. There seemed such a perfect understanding between them.

The moneylender very often did not show at all at his wife's parties; but sometimes he came in and asked for a cup of tea when the drawing-rooms were crowded: and one evening at the Opera, Denys turned round at the sound of a closing door and found that Mr Aarons had slipped into a chair at the back of the box. He was an ardent lover of music, like so many of his race.

That evening Captain Arundel had come up from Windsor, where he was stationed, had dined at Stratfield Place, and accompanied them to the Opera, where they arrived in time for the first scene. He had something else to go on to before returning to Windsor by the midnight train, he explained.

There had been a third guest at dinner, a young lady whom Mrs Aarons introduced as Miss Barton and addressed as Margery.

'Margery's father has lent her to me for a few days,' she said to Denys. 'She is all he has, and he can hardly bear her out of his sight.'

Miss Barton smiled and flushed. Denys noticed that she flushed very easily. She was very young—hardly more than eighteen, he judged, and she had a small, dark, beautiful profile, with such ardent eyes as are oftener seen in the south than the colder north. She was somewhat flamboyantly dressed for so young a

girl, in geranium pink satin, softened indeed by the puritanical little muslin fichu draped about her shoulders and held in place by a beautiful dark red rose. But nothing could have made a better sitting for her passionate, yet innocent beauty.

She hardly glanced at Denys, but he was quite well content. He observed her quickly. He had a baffling sense of having seen her somewhere before. Of course, it must be a delusion, he said to himself: he could not have seen anything so beautiful without remembering it definitely.

Hilary Arundel had come in late for dinner. Denys happened to look at Miss Barton as he entered. He saw that she quivered suddenly from head to foot. Deep colour flooded her cheeks, and, as she looked down at her plate, he had an intuition that it was to conceal the joy in her eyes under the night-dark lashes.

He had an amazed wonder at so much feeling for the cold, supercilious young gentleman, who came in apologising for his lateness, bowing over his hostess's hand again as though he kissed it. He nodded curtly to Denys. Then his eyes went on to the girl, who was so obviously in love with him, and a cold, half-amused triumph was in his smile as he went round to shake hands with her.

Denys felt himself cast in those days for the part of spectator. He was well content, feeling his own real life to be far away.

Captain Arundel had kept the ball of light conversation going at the dinner-table. It was a round table: an electric light bulb, green-shaded, drawn low on a bowl of growing lilies of the valley amid their exquisite leaves, divided Denys from his aversion;

but he did not deny, even to himself, that Arundel talked well.

Mrs Aarons seemed to think so. She was looking extremely well in a dress of such blue as belongs to the night-sky, a deep, dark, wonderful blue. She leant an arm on the table and propped her cheek with her hand as she listened to the talk. Her arms were beautiful and the lace falling away from the bare arm revealed its beauty. Her eyes were fixed on Arundel. There were depths of tenderness in them. It came suddenly to Denys that Mrs Aarons was still a beautiful woman, although she had reached middle-age.

He had noticed before that she ate very little. She toyed with her food, saying enough to keep the conversation going, now and again addressing a remark to Denys, trying to draw him into the talk. He had time to observe that the tenderness of her gaze flowed over upon the young girl, who sat in a flushed rapturous silence, a radiant little figure, her satin-dark head bound with a fillet of roses.

There was something curious in Mrs Aarons's expression as she looked at Miss Barton, something of pain as well as tender pleasure in the girl's childish beauty. Somehow he did not wish to analyse it. He had a queer feeling that he had spied and seen something he should not have seen, and he put the thing away out of his mind quickly, as though it was something to be ashamed of.

In the carriage, as they drove to the theatre, he was aware that Hilary Arundel, leaning back in the warm gloom—they were late in going—had taken possession of the girl's little hand, fondling it idly before dropping it as the carriage rolled into the blaze of electric light

which flowed down Oxford Street. It offended his fastidiousness. He had an idea that Mrs Aarons looked pale as she smiled at him in the sudden light, but discarded the idea as unfounded. It was only the blue glare of the arc lamps in the April evening that had made him imagine such a thing.

The Opera was *Tristan und Isolde*: Mrs Aarons was lost in the music once it had begun. She and Denys sat in front of the box. Hilary Arundel had managed so that he and Margery Barton were in the back.

There was a low whispering. Once Denys glanced behind and saw something that made him look hastily away. Margery Barton, red as a rose, looking ecstatically happy but very shy, was listening to what the thin red lips under the golden moustache were saying almost into her little ear. So close were the two heads that the man's moustache must have touched the girl's neck.

Denys was offended, uneasy, at this open love-making. He supposed Mrs Aarons was unaware of it as she sat in rapt contemplation of the stage. He was conscious all through the music of the love-making so close to him. He had a rigid disapproval of Hilary Arundel, because it was Hilary Arundel, for he was not censorious of other men. What did he mean by talking as he had done of Dawn Finucane? It annoyed Denys unreasonably to think that they had met. No gentleman, he said to himself bitterly, would have behaved as Arundel was behaving.

With the interval Mr Aarons came into the box. He had been in another part of the house. He nodded to Arundel, shook hands with Margery Barton, and sat down beside her. He began pointing out some of

the notabilities. There was an end to the love-making which had so offended Denys.

'That is Lady Hebe Kinnersley over there,' he said, 'and her daughters, Diana and Undine. She is an American, and very rich. They like to do eccentric things, so they come in half-way through *Tristan*. They will probably talk through the next act and make their neighbours very uncomfortable. If some one hisses them they will be very much pleased. And over yonder is Mr William Urquhart—a great power in society, and a very charming man. In the little box beside him is Lady Wilmut, who was Miss Sadie Conyers of the Pall Mall Theatre. She is a much more domesticated lady than the others. There is——'

He was interrupted by Captain Arundel getting up and saying that he must slip away before the curtain rose again.

Denys made way for Mr Aarons, who sat down in the chair beside his wife and at once began talking to her in a low, confidential voice, taking the chair Hilary Arundel had vacated. He made a bad substitute apparently, for Miss Barton did not seem inclined to talk. She rested her cheek on her hand and her beautiful little profile had a pensive air.

The curtain was just about to rise when she moved from her position. She looked between the heads of the two in the front of the box. She leant back again in her chair. He almost thought she shivered. Her head drooped wearily. Then the auditorium was dark. The curtain had risen.

He was unaware of what had caused the change in her till, later on, when the lights were on again, he saw Hilary Arundel sitting in the opposite box beside one

of the young ladies whom Mr Aarons had indicated as the Misses Kinnersley. She was a beautiful girl, dressed audaciously in a garment of tomato-red, mingled with black and very *décolleté*.

For a second she and Arundel were so absorbed in each other that apparently they did not discover that the lights were on. Denys wondered if Margery Barton had seen. He had had a sudden revelation. It was she who had been in the boat with Arundel that Sunday afternoon at Homewood. Remembering the thin, triumphant laugh, he detested Hilary Arundel.

CHAPTER VI

COMING HOME

WITH an old-fashioned courtesy, Mr Aarons saw Denys off at Euston. Mrs Aarons had appeared at the early breakfast-table, but there was no sign of Miss Barton.

‘She is tired, poor child,’ Mrs Aarons said. ‘She is so sensitive to the music. *Tristan* is certainly exhausting.’

She bade Denys an affectionate farewell, telling him to come again soon. As they drove through the fresh, newly-watered morning streets, beautiful as London streets could be in those far away spring days, with the new greenery and the bright window boxes and flowers everywhere against the black house fronts, Mr Aarons spoke of his wife’s liking for Denys as though he spoke of a queen’s favour. He was evidently pleased with Denys’s shy, enthusiastic response, for he patted his hand as he spoke.

‘Ach, it is well bestowed. It is nearly always so with my Rachel—not quite always: what would you have? Two cannot always see alike, no matter how close they are.’

Again he turned and asked Denys what he thought of Hilary Arundel. Denys’s candid face must have answered him, for he went on without waiting for speech.

‘I do not like him,’ he said. ‘He is not a gentleman,

though a man of good family. You saw last night. That poor little Margery! She is the doctor's daughter at Homewood. My wife is very fond of her. I am sorry she has been thrown a good deal with Captain Arundel. When we are alone at Homewood—I have always much to tell my Rachel—the young people are left to amuse each other. I fear she is in love with him, and he—is not in love. Strange are the ways of women. There may be more in him than I can see. My Rachel is a wise woman. I think perhaps he shows her another side. It was not pretty that he should go to that box last night and make love to another under the poor child's eyes.'

Denys could hardly believe in his good fortune as the train rushed off from Euston bearing him fast to the West. He had put away his misgivings about how Lord Leenane would take his intervention. After all, he had given him his confidence: he had made him agent over what was left of his Irish property. He couldn't but be pleased. If only he, Denys, could pull Leenane out of the financial muddle he had got into, what might not happen yet? He did not dare to look his dreams in the face. Mr Aarons had promised to finance him if the schemes for turning those bogs and arid places into gold were not as he said, wild-cat schemes. He, unaided, had reclaimed the Little Bog, to where the trees stood with their feet in the water. It had been a great undertaking for a boy. His father had thought it sheer insanity—but he had accomplished it. In his dream, as the Wild Irishman carried him on his way to the Island of Dreams, he saw a fair and fertile land studded with many white-houses, where was the marshy land and the black bog. Not that he wanted a country

without the bogs. He loved the coloured bogs and the great arch of the sky, the white, golden-thatched cabins perched upon them like brooding, wonderful birds, the peat smoke indigo against the brown background: the peewit and the curlew crying, the wild geese high overhead, the solitary heron by the water pools. He was always lonesome for the bogs when he was away from them, but he wanted habitations as well. There was too much bog.

He was eager to be back, to begin the great work. He was much better equipped for it now than he had been as an ignorant sixteen-year-old boy. He had a memory which made him suddenly red, of himself, standing under Dawn Finucane's imperious beautiful young eyes, a yokel, he called himself, remembering the rough clothes and the tousled head, the unwashed look he must have presented to the dainty little lady with the golden curls falling to her shoulders from under the green velvet hunting cap. He had an uneasy idea that his nails must have been as black as jet. He had been growing up a peasant boy, like the others, he, a Fitzmaurice of Murrough, till she came, till her father stretched out a hand to lift him from the earth. Could he ever do enough for the Finucanes?

He looked up from his dreams and met the kind eyes of an old priest sitting opposite to him, who was just laying aside his breviary as a thing finished with. The old man smiled.

'You look as though the train was middling slow,' he said. 'You'll be going home to something pleasant?'

'My father,' Denys replied and blushed, and the old priest noticed the blush, and there came a roguish twinkle in his eye.

'A father is a very good thing,' he said. 'I've known a father to come before a mother now and again, though not often!'

They talked. The simple history of the old man was very soon told. He was the parish priest of a wild mountain-glen in Donegal. Somewhere far back in the troubles the landlord had been shot, and his son, who had succeeded to the estates, had never forgiven the people. 'I used to pray he'd be brought to a better mind to do his duty by them,' the old man said quietly.

'And he hasn't been?' said Denys.

'Listen, now, and I'll tell you. It all happened the funniest way you ever heard. I shouldn't have misjudged him. I thought he only wanted the rents and didn't care a fig about the poor people. Well, my heart was broken with fighting the poverty of the place. We were always draggin' the devil by the tail, if you ever heard that saying, and keepin' only a slippery houl't of it at that, as the saying goes on. So my health broke down, and the Bishop sent me to Dublin for a holiday. I dreaded going away beyond all things, for on the only holiday I'd had before, I was just getting over the first trouble of my shyness when it was time to come back: and I hadn't got more brazen in the seven years between. But the Bishop put me under obedience and I went, and as good luck would have it, I met the nicest fellow I ever laid eyes on in the train. You could see he was a soldier by the way he carried himself, and he was one of the tallest men I ever saw, with a kind, roguish face, and a twinkle in his eye. He was very kind to me, and seeing I had nothing with me to eat—I never thought how long and cold the journey was going to be—

he made me share his lunch, and a nice lunch it was. Then he won me to talk, and before ever I knew where I was I was telling him about the Glen and the poor people, and how his lordship kept away, and saying he wouldn't do it if only he knew them : how harmless they were, and how little to blame for what happened long ago. He listened with the greatest interest and then he asked me where I was going to stay in Dublin. I said I didn't know at all, I never stayed in Dublin before. Maybe the Gresham : I'd heard talk of that hotel.'

' "The Gresham's very good," said he, "but you'd do better to come to my hotel. It will be cheaper on ye," says he.

'So I gave in to him, and when we got to the big station he led me down the back way to where there was a fine carriage and pair standing; and the coachman looked so grand that he might have been the Lord Mayor. I was a bit frightened about the hotel he was taking me to when I saw the carriage, and I was just trying to explain that I wanted a quiet, cheap place, when we drew up at the door of a big house. When the door was opened by a grand fellow in livery, the prettiest young lady I ever saw came running down the stairs and threw her arms round the big man's neck, though he had to stoop to let her do it. And there was a darling little girl like a fairy, with a yellow head and a green velvet dress, coming down the big stairs, holding on to the banisters. I was frightened when I saw the place—it was so grand, the grand red walls and the statues and the flowers everywhere, and the warm, sweet smell of it all. The Bishop's Palace was a poor place beside it. But I thought to put out my hand and

steady the little fairy girl, for she didn't seem too sure on her feet. And the little thing laughed up in my face—something most enchanting.

'Then the big gentleman thought of me standing there, and "Esmé, my dear," says he, "I want to introduce you to Father Michael Flannery, the parish priest of Glenistioge. He's been telling me a lot about the Glen and the people, and he's brought me to a sense of my duty. It wasn't your fault I didn't come to it long ago."

'And now, who do you think the gentleman was but Lord Inistioge himself? The Bishop said afterwards that it was plain to be seen Who had sent me on that journey, and brought his lordship there as well, and put us travelling together, for the Bishop had placed me under obedience to travel first-class—a thing I'd never have thought of doing. Wasn't it all too wonderful?'

Denys agreed that it was all too wonderful.

'The Glen has another face on it now, that the people and his lordship have made up the quarrel. Sure it was one-sided always. There isn't a summer in it that himself and her ladyship and the wee colleen don't spend a week with me—for all that there's a grand hotel at the head of the Glen.'

With such talk the journey was beguiled.

At Chester, Father Flannery bought the *Freeman's Journal*. Denys was well provided with literature. Now and again he looked across with a certain tender amusement at the priest's simple, benignant old face, wearing a pair of large spectacles, with tortoise-shell frames, which, he had explained, were a gift from Lord Inistioge. 'They don't add to my beauty,' he had said

humorously, as he put them on, 'but they're real handy to see with.'

His finger, as he read the papers extended on his knee, went travelling along the lines of print. He seemed to find a deal to interest him in the *Freeman's Journal*. Denys had just noticed that, having read the paper proper right through, he had begun on the back page advertisements, when the very blue eyes looked up at him over the disfiguring spectacles.

'This'll be your part o' the world,' he said. 'There's going to be an auction there. Castle Clogher, Lord Leenane's place. It'll be a fine auction. After a races I like an auction; I'd go nearly any distance for a good one. It's grand amusement to pick up a bargain.'

He was launching off into further reminiscences when Denys leant across and took the paper. Yes: there it was staring at him from the printed sheet. Furniture and effects, indoor and outdoor, at Castle Clogher, Dunmoon, Co. Galway. Leenane had been very quick about it. He had not given his new agent much of a chance.

He read through the advertisement carefully before restoring the paper to its owner. It was what the auctioneer called a residue auction. Nothing of any great value. But he would have liked to keep the place intact for Dawn's sake, and he felt disappointed and annoyed about Leenane's haste to sell.

Father Flannery was saying that he liked a residue auction. Nobody ever knew what luck there might be in it. A priest, he knew, had picked up a Waterford glass bowl, in which some one had been growing bulbs, in the potting shed at a residue auction. It was grimed over in earth so that it didn't look like glass

at all, only Father Tracey was clever enough to spot it.

Somewhere in the Midlands Denys had had a queer fancy that by a carriage window of a fast train going in the opposite direction he had caught a glimpse of Dawn's young face. His heart had leaped at the fancy, but he had dismissed it as a fancy. The trains had passed each other at such speed that recognition would have been practically impossible. What had come to him that he was seeing Dawn Finucane everywhere?

Still—it was just possible they had passed each other. He might have missed them by a few hours. Lord Leenane was always an erratic person. He had talked of Bath and Cheltenham. It was just as likely that he would go off travelling somewhere, quite beyond reach of his newly-appointed agent. Denys reproached himself for the time he had delayed in London. The receipt in full from Simon Aarons, which he carried in the breast pocket on his coat, became a dull thing from what it had been.

When he reached Drum station the placards stared at him from the walls. He had come down by the night mail, and they were still the small hours when he emerged from the station to find his father patiently waiting with the little mare, Lady's sister, in the dog-cart. Pat Fitzmaurice's gray head nodded a little when Denys first caught sight of him, and the spectacle gave the son's heart a certain pang. His father had been doing much more of late than he need have done if his son had gone on in his footsteps. However, he was alert as soon as Denys hailed him. Mick McBride, the porter, a very friendly person, had come out from the station carrying a swinging lantern in one hand and Denys's

portmanteau in the other. The light of the lantern had shown up the flaring auction posters.

'It's good to have you back, boy,' said his father. 'It seemed like a month of Sundays that you were away. All is goin' well. You've just missed Lord Leenane. He called in to say good-bye on Sunday, and Miss Dawn with him. He said he hoped to see you in London. They left that night.'

So it was Dawn he had seen, her cheek of apple-blossom resting pensively in her little hand. He felt blank disappointment, but he did not reveal it to the old man as he gathered up the reins, and the little mare, whose mouth was as soft as silk, went off in a gentle rush between the scented hedgerows. Day was just showing above the mountains. The first birds were stirring in the nests. The morning world was wearing the strange, lonely, aloof look of early morning, something of still life, a painted picture, not a thing that lived.

'The furniture of Clogher is up for auction,' Pat Fitzmaurice went on, giving the news. 'George Armstrong, the Galway solicitor, has charge of it, and Patsy Hynes is sellin'. I wonder he didn't wait till you came home, he havin' made you the agent. There'll be nothing in it—the agency I mean. He'll have to sell what's left him. They say all that's good in the house is gone.'

Plainly the father was a little offended, thinking his son ill-treated. What was George Armstrong, only a small attorney?—and his father a polisman? The old man nodded again while he talked and pulled himself up with a jerk, explaining that yesterday was Moy Fair, and he was up at three in the morning, as he had

a few bullocks there. They had done very well. It was a great year. If things went on as they were going it would be an early year.

'Too bad,' said Denys, 'that you should have come to meet me. I meant to have taken a car from the Railway Hotel.'

'And why would you do that, having a car of your own?' his father asked, and added: 'Wouldn't I go any distance for a sight of your face, lad?'

Denys glanced affectionately at the rosy, weather-beaten face, rather unwontedly pale, because there had been no time for shaving before the late start. The chilly light of early morning fell upon it, the good firm mouth, the short, straight nose, the blue eyes under their bushy eyebrows, furrowed about with lines and wrinkles. His father had not asked him what he had done with the two thousand pounds he had taken away with him, which represented the bulk of the savings of a laborious lifetime.

'It is good to come home to you, father,' he said, and added: 'I have brought you back a thousand pounds. The other thousand——'

'Did I ask you about the money?' said Patrick Fitzmaurice, with a voice of scorn. 'It's glad I am to see you coming home, whether there's money in it or not.'

CHAPTER VII

THE AUCTION

It was a wet May evening when Denys Fitzmaurice, accompanied Mr George Armstrong and Hynes, the auctioneer, on an inspection of Castle Clogher. It was the day before the auction. The house was as dark as an old house of narrow windows, part cartelated, can be of a wet May evening, when the shadows of heavy clouds go stealing up the walls, and the wet ivy shines at every window. The corners out of range of the windows were so obscure that one had to peer closely to see their contents.

‘I hope it will be better weather than this to-morrow,’ said George Armstrong, a small man with a cute face, deeply sunk, reddish eyes and side-whiskers. He looked as though he ought to be chewing a straw, and his looks did not belie him, for he was a good judge of a horse and well known on every racecourse in Ireland. ‘If we haven’t got better light you’ll want the lamps, Mr Hynes, for the people to see the things.’

‘What would be the matter with the weather on a May mornin’? All the same it might be as well they didn’t see what they were buying,’ Mr Hynes said cynically. ‘There isn’t much in it. I’ve brought in a lot of old things from the lofts over the stables. The horse-hair of some of the chairs is gone to maggots, I should think, judgin’ by the holes: there isn’t a bed in the house that’s not worm-eaten.’

'There are some beautiful wardrobes,' Mr Armstrong said, lingering over the adjective as though he loved it.

'Are you thinkin' of gettin' married, Mr Armstrong?' Mr Hynes asked jocularly. 'They'd make lovely presses for the mistress's trousseau.'

George Armstrong laughed. He was a confirmed bachelor.

'Mrs Hynes and the young ladies might like one apiece,' he answered. 'The ones with the glass doors, where they could see their pretty faces.'

Mrs Hynes was notoriously plain-featured—she had brought her husband three thousand pounds—and her daughters favoured her. Hynes himself was a ruddy big man, with a rollicking eye, without illusions on the subject of his feminine belongings.

'Their looks won't put their souls in danger,' he said, 'but they're hard-workin' girls. They'd make grand farmers' wives, so they would. There's nothing they aren't up to from calves to bees, and they're very lucky. The purty ones are content to be more ignorant.'

Denys did not join in the rough, rallying talk. To him the dim rooms with the piled-up furniture brought a sense of desolation.

'Is there anything any good in it at all, Patsy?' Mr Armstrong asked.

'Divil a much. There are some chairs David Strong took a fancy to. He says they're apple-white, or somethin' like that. All I know is the stuffin' is comin' out of them, and they're destroyed with damp. They were in an old coach-house these many years back. Not much apple that I could see about them, nor white either. I promised David a short knock. He's a decent fellow.'

'What is that?' asked Denys, unearthing something from behind an old hip-bath and a clothes horse.

'That's her ladyship's harp. I wonder his lordship left it. I heard her once playin' on it in the Town Hall at Galway. Her arms were lovely on it, and her hands. She had as pretty a pair of hands as ever I saw in a woman. I noticed Miss Dawn had the same, as she stood leanin' on the back of her father's chair when him and me were talkin' about the auction. Now I come to think of it, we didn't talk much about the same auction. We began on it and then we fell to talkin' of old times. He didn't mean to go so soon then, but he took a kind of a dislike to seein' the walls placarded with the posters and off he went.'

'Buy in the harp for me,' said Denys.

'Very well, Mr Fitzmaurice. What price?'

'Oh, it doesn't matter. Whatever price it goes to.'

It was not the last by many of the things Mr Hynes was bidden to buy in for Mr Fitzmaurice. He commented on it humorously afterwards to George Armstrong, as they sat over a hastily-lit turf-fire in the Imperial Hotel at Drum, a hostelry which did not at all live up to its high-sounding title.

'Think of it!' he said. 'Pat Fitzmaurice's little boy! "Buy it in for me, Mr Hynes!" he says. Meself and Pat sat on the same form at the Christian Brothers' Schools below in John Street. Whatever scholarship ayther of us has we got there. Old Mrs Fitzmaurice was alive then, and she kept Pat very tidy, not like me that always had the seat out of me breeches from slidin' down the slope in the Long Field. An' here's Pat's boy sayin' with a lovely English accent: "Please buy it in for me, Mr Hynes."'

Mr Hynes gave an amazing attempt at mimicry of Denys's speech.

'He's blown up with pride, that's what he is,' said Mr Armstrong gloomily, 'through Leenane givin' him the agency. Agent over nothing, I thank you. If it was to be an agency at all it ought to be a legal man with a legal mind that had it.'

'Like yourself, George,' said Mr Hynes.

'I don't know that it would be worth my while taking it. Still, I've done a bit for Leenane before now. But sure, what's the good of talking? Leenane's broke out of it. The whipper-snapper won't get much from th' agency. I wonder where he buys his clothes?'

'I dunno,' said Mr Hynes thoughtfully. 'They don't smack of Drum somehow. Did ye mind, George, that he was very bent on buyin' in all that belonged to the young lady, or might belong to her?'

Mr Armstrong stared thoughtfully at Mr Hynes for a few seconds. Then he hit him a resounding thwack on the knee.

'You're the divil, Hynes!' said he. 'It didn't occur to me. Well, if that doesn't bang Banagher and Banagher bangs the divil. Pat Fitzmaurice's son and Lord Leenane's daughter. It comes from calling the boy be th' outlandish name of Denys. D E N Y S, if ye please. Wasn't plain Dinny good enough?'

He was taken with such a fit of scornful laughter that he all but choked, and had to be beaten violently on the back by Mr Hynes before he could get his breath.

'Well, I think I'll go to bed after that,' he said, recovering himself. 'I'm not like to hear better for many a long day. I'll be up early in the morning to help you

to put out the last o' the things. I wish the woman here would learn to build a turf-fire and let the Intermediate Education alone. She's above her business, that's what she is. But sure, what matter if the food's poison when she got the silver medal for English Literature in the Second Grade !'

'One way or another, Boards is the curse of Ireland,' Mr Hynes said, and yawned. 'You'd know a Congested fellow a mile off by the swagger of him, and an Irish Light's near as bad, let alone a Fishery.'

Meanwhile Denys, blissfully unconscious of the profanation of his sacred things, sat by his own fire-side with his father, telling him, over a pipe, of all the strange things that had happened during his London visit. Pat Fitzmaurice had gone to Dublin once or twice for the Horse Show or a race-meeting. Those occasions were the purple patches in his life. But to travel outside the Four Seas of Ireland was beyond his wildest dreams. He had accepted placidly the use Denys had made of his thousand pounds. 'Sure it will all be yours one day, boy,' he had said. Equally he was satisfied when Denys gave him a minute account of the articles he had bidden Mr Hynes buy in for him at the auction.

'Lord Leenane won't see you at the loss of the money if he can pay it, and if he doesn't want the things itself, Patsy Hynes will see you don't get too bad a bargain of them. Him and me were at school together, and he's a great man for givin' his friends a short knock, let alone that he puts the people in such a good temper that he rises no disputes. I think I'll take a day off and come over with you to-morrow, lad. It'll be a holiday

for me, and a pleasant one to be with you, let alone the auction.'

'Do!' said Denys. 'You take too few holidays.'

'I got in the habit of workin' when you were away from me. I hardly sat down to read my *Freeman* even. It was so lonesome in the house without you, an' Rory kept turnin' an eye on me now and again, askin' me when you'd be home. Oh, indeed, it was a lonely time when you were away.'

'Oh,' said Denys, with the pang he often felt over his father. 'I was a selfish brute to stay so long away.'

He stooped to caress Rory's fast-whitening muzzle.

'Look what it has made of you!' said Pat Fitzmaurice, with naïve pride in his son. 'Would I have had you back a day sooner if I could? 'Twas no wonder they were makin' much of you in London.'

It was a twenty minutes drive from Murrough Farm to Castle Clogher across the mountains and by the lakes, and, leaving at half-past seven with the little mare between the shafts, they were sure of being in good time for the auction, which was to begin at twelve. They had not counted on Mrs Nestor, at the level crossing, having mislaid the key of the gate, which was padlocked against them.

When they had at last attracted Mrs Nestor's attention, which was not till Denys had climbed the gate and gone in at the low door of her little house, she was profuse in her apologies. 'She didn't know what was the matter with that ould kay. It was for ever slippin' through her pocket or hiding itself away in the last place you'd look for it. Anyhow it was gone these three days. The last place she found it when she missed it, was in the goat's shed, but it wasn't there

now. Anyhow she hoped the gentlemen would forgive her. The same ould kay was a great inconvenience to the travellin' public.'

There was nothing for them to do but to turn back and make a detour of some five Irish miles. Denys was grimly amused, while his father expatiated on the impudence of the railways in taking the public road and leaving only a bothered old woman to look after the gates.

'If it isn't one thing it's another,' he said. 'The mail train took the gates with her on the front of the engine till she stopped at the next station, one night last week. And the best of it was the passengers never knew a thing about it. It was the guard was tellin' Mikie Morrissey, an' he told it to me.'

In the result, the auction was well on its way when the Fitzmaurices, father and son, arrived. They left the mare; her nosebag on, in charge of somebody's coachman, and entered the hall of the house—a capacious hall with an inner door which had a beautiful glass screen and fanlight. The hall and staircase were crowded with small boys, despite the fact that a shilling was charged for entrance, to be returned to purchasers. Apparently the person who was to collect the shillings had grown tired of his job and gone away.

The small boys were eager to impart information.

'He's sellin' in the drawin' room now. You'll have no chance of gettin' in unless you was to walk in on the people's heads.'

'He might be shovin'.'

'Try the windy, sir! He's standin' up on the middle windy. I'll show you where he is!'

From the shower of advice that rained upon him
D.D.

Denys selected what seemed the best. The throng of people had flowed out into the hall, where late arrivals were standing tiptoe, looking over each other's shoulders in a vain attempt to see what was going on in the room. Mr Hynes's strident voice came out into the hall.

'Make way for the lady that wants to buy the room. Well, ma'am, what's your bid for the chandelier. Seven-and-six. It cost a hundred pounds. Not Waterford, but look at the lovely shiny drops of it. A pound, thank you. Two pounds. We won't take any shillin' bids. It's in your catalogues, if you only take the trouble of readin' them.'

A little woman with a very red face forced herself through the crowd out into the hall. Denys had been thinking of the window, but he saw his chance, and before the crowd had closed up again he was a few feet beyond the doorway, with the complaints of the red-faced woman, who was apparently the bidder of seven and sixpence for the chandelier, following him.

'I didn't come here to be insulted be Patsy Hynes,' she said, and her voice lifted. 'Come home, John Morris, and don't be wastin' your time at this auction. There'll be no bargains here to-day, I can tell you. There's no fairity in it, so there isn't.'

The crowd tittered and a very big man, who was apparently John Morris and the husband of the little woman, remarked across the massed heads:—

'Women'll talk. There's no use tryin' to hinder them.'

The chandelier fell at seven pounds ten, and the auctioneer passed on to the pictures. There had been no pictures when Denys went over the house, except some deplorable things, daubs of one kind or another,

school-girl drawings, shiny, highly-coloured prints from Christmas numbers, which were scattered through the bedrooms. It was none of these the auctioneer was selling.

His assistant was holding up to public view some old oil sea and landscapes, the frames broken, the colours cracked. A portrait of a lady seated in an arm-chair might be Mrs Metcalfe. He was not sure, but he bought it. He had liked Mrs Metcalfe very much at their first and only meeting. It fell to him for a few shillings: the faded, pretty thing in the oval frame made no appeal to the crowd.

The next lot was a couple of crayon drawings.

'A queer thing,' said one man to another, 'that Leenane should sell his mother's pictures! Oh, yes, the Dowager was a good bit of an artist. Used to exhibit in London, I heard.'

Denys caught the speech and bought the pictures. He was almost suffocated where he stood. A man in front had his elbow somewhere between Denys's ribs, and the folded arms of a tall person behind were crossed on his shoulders. In the constrained attitude he stood and bought the Dowager's pictures, giving very little for them, since they did not interest the crowd.

Presently something happened of a more exciting character. A pair of oval portraits of ladies, in oil, were put up—and a little yellow, hook-nosed, dirty man, near the door, started with a bid of five pounds.

'That's Levi from Westport,' some one said behind Denys, 'he's the only dealer in it. The Dublin men wouldn't be bothered comin' down here, let alone that there's a great auction at Bennett's to-day—Lord Rosslare's: he was a great collector.'

Denys craned his neck and bid ten pounds for the portraits. The Jew went to fifteen. Twenty—twenty-five—twenty-six. The crowd began to get excited. One or two made rash bids. A man who was a shop-keeper in Drum bid thirty pounds: and a voice in the crowd asked him sarcastically how he'd face the missus when he went home with the story that he'd spent thirty pounds on a couple of pictures. Thirty-five—forty—forty-five. The blood had got into Denys's head. He was quite prepared to go on bidding against the Jew, who apparently was not a popular person, for the crowd was imploring Denys to go on, and some of the more excited were calling out that the tall young gentleman's was the last bid and should be taken.

Fifty pounds. It was Denys's bid. The crowd about the door swayed. There was a choking, gurgling sound. Some one had fainted perhaps. No wonder: the room was stifling.

The auctioneer's hammer fell. 'Fifty pounds for the pictures: Mr Fitzmaurice's bid.' The pictures were whisked away and the next lot came up.

A thick Semitic voice began to protest—Mr Levi's, apparently. Mr Levi had a bad cold, and was choking with a cough. The pictures should be put up again. He had not stopped bidding, not at all, but an accursed boy—'aggursed,' he called it—had dealt him a blow in his 'shest'; he had seen the stars dance before him, and when he 'regovered' the pictures were sold.

The crowd only roared with laughter, and Mr Hynes went on as if he had not heard.

By the end of the day Denys found himself the possessor of many pictures, besides Lady Leenane's.

harp, an old French bed, a nursery-screen covered with coloured 'scraps,' which he imagined Dawn's little fingers having traced in her baby days, a child's chair—over the last two purchases the crowd had roared with laughter—a lady's workbox, a little papier-mâché writing-desk, a Sheraton looking-glass, all of which might or might not have had associations with Dawn Finucane.

When he went up to pay for his purchases Mr Hynes shook him warmly by the hand.

'If I were you, Mr Fitzmaurice,' he said, taking him aside, 'I'd carry off your fifty pounds worth to-night. It's too valuable to be left lyin' about. I was glad you got them—your father and I were at the Christian Brothers' Schools together, as I think I informed you yesterday. Beside, I owed Levi a grudge. He's always givin' trouble, refusin' to pay and wantin' lots put up again. Let alone that, I'd rather have a Christian than a Jew any day.'

'Thank you very much,' said Denys. 'I'll take the pictures. By the way, I didn't see them yesterday when I was going over the house?'

'You didn't. They were stacked together in a lumber room at the top of the house. We only cleared it this mornin'. The dust and cobwebs were a caution. It's a good many years since a sweepin' brush and duster were in that room. Well, good-bye, Mr Fitzmaurice. You'll call in and see us when next in Drum. Mrs Hynes and the girls'll be delighted. Pot luck any day you like to come, an' welcome.'

Denys assured him that he would be delighted to meet Mrs and the Misses Hynes, and went out with the pictures under his arm to where his father was standing

by the mare's head discussing the auction prices. His face lightened as he saw Denys : no fear of reproaches there for his extravagance !

'Is that your fifty pounds' worth?' he asked cheerfully. 'Quite right, lad, to take it away. I've been settlin' with a man here from Athavarra to carry the rest when the auction's over. You'll be buyin' more, maybe to-morrow.'

A boy plucked at Denys's coat as he was putting the pictures carefully into the 'well of the car.

'Tip us a shillin' sir,' he said. 'I choked the Jew for ye.'

'You rascal !' said Denys, looking round at the small, foxy-faced urchin. 'May I ask why you did that, and why you expect me to reward you for your evil doings?

'I liked the looks o' ye,' said the boy, grinning : 'an' I wasn't goin' to have ye bet be a Jew. That fellow 'd ha' gone on till the Day of Judgmint. Well, if ye won't tip me a shillin' for that, tip it because I was the boy that towld ye to get in be the windy.'

Denys laughed, and tossed the boy half-a-crown.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXPERT

IN his own room at home next morning Denys played what his father would have called 'antics' with the pictures. It was not the best room for the purpose, being low-ceiled and dark under the thatch, the little windows deep set in the thick walls. Over-night he had examined his purchases carefully, and his pulses had quickened, for what he saw and suspected. Now, in the morning light he was even more excited. He did not know enough to be sure, but he believed the pictures to be good.

One represented an old lady sitting in a high-backed arm-chair, her white head against the rich embroidery of the cushions. Her whiteness and frailness were almost unearthly by contrast with the deep colour. She leant forward a little and her eyes looked at you, living, out of the spirited gracious old face. Beside her on a table of deep red mahogany, which took the light like a mirror, was a tall blue jar of Madonna lilies.

The second portrait was of a young lady wearing a dress of deep blue velvet, with a collar of exquisite old lace. Her curling auburn hair was dressed high above her candid forehead. The irregular, beautifully tinted face and the blue eyes wore an expression of boyish gaiety and high-heartedness. This, too, was a portrait of character. The painting of the fabrics, the heavy

gray silk of the old lady's dress, the velvet and lace of the young lady's, was triumphantly good. In the clear, cold morning light the blue of the velvet glowed like a sapphire.

Having set the two portraits against a wall where the north light fell on them, Denys stood back and stared at his new possessions. He wished Waring were near at hand to give him advice. Waring, who had been with him at Wolvercote and Oxford, had been mad on pictures. He had talked a deal on art to a not always attentive ear. He had painted queer, fantastic pictures himself, and he was a wizard at the piano, playing all the great music he had ever heard. But Waring was somewhere in the Balkans, and Denys did not know who else to go to. The velvety brown eyes, with their deep look of peace, would have decided at once that the paintings were good, or not good.

Waring had dragged Denys to various picture galleries and sales when they had spent a week together in London one Easter. Perhaps the inattentive listener and gazer had absorbed more than he knew. The extraordinary graciousness and dignity of the portraits so laid hold upon Denys that he felt for a moment as if he must keep them for his own delight.

He locked them away carefully before he left the house and took the key of his room in his pocket. He drove alone to the auction, as it was market-day in Drum, where he left his father with the intention of picking him up later in the day.

He was entering the house when he knocked up against the man he wanted to see, George Armstrong. They were both early arrivals.

'What is this, I hear?' Mr Armstrong said facetiously.

'They are telling me you wouldn't let anybody get what they wanted yesterday; that you're the most unpopular man with the old women in the county to-day. That was a great trick you played on Levi: they're telling me you bribed a young divil of a boy to knock the wind out of the poor man while you bought in what you fancied. He swears he'll take the law agin' Patsy Hynes and break the sale.'

Denys waved away the badinage.

'I didn't see those pictures the day we went round the house.'

'For a good reason: they weren't there. Some of Hynes's people rooted them out of a forgotten lumber-room. Patsy's very strong on his commission, although he'll give a short knock to a friend now and again, as he did to yourself yesterday. I was that bad with the lumbago after the wet day on Tuesday that I couldn't get over. If I'd been here I wouldn't have let the Dowager's pictures be sold. I'm sure Leenane wouldn't have wished it. I'm glad you bought them. You'll let him have them back if he wants them?'

'I bought them for that purpose. Tell me, Mr Armstrong, do you know anything about the pictures, the pair I bought for fifty pounds?'

Armstrong's face deepened into wrinkles of cunning humour.

'Ye'll make your fortune out o' them,' he said. 'Then ye needn't be bothered with an agency where there's no business.'

'Mr Levi thought the pictures good.'

'He did. So that's what put you on to them. That and the excitement of the bidding. It's worse than horse-racing. There was a poor divil yesterday bought

five hundred jampots at the end o' the day for tuppence apiece, and daren't go home to tell his wife. He was begging Patsy Hynes, I hear, to put them up again this morning. Patsy, for the joke, said he'd never consent to deprive him of his bargain. But he'll do it. He's a real good-natured man.'

There was not much to see at the auction, but the country people bidding against each other frantically for things they had no use for and articles of furniture they could not possibly get into their houses. It would have made a wonderful picture for a *genre* painter, he thought, as he gazed over the excited, covetous, amused, cynical faces.

He was back in Drum by three o'clock, much earlier than his father had expected to see him, and startled him with the tidings that he meant to go up to Dublin by the night mail on his way to London with the paintings. For the first time Pat Fitzmaurice looked a little puzzled and bewildered.

'You won't be takin' to goin' hither an' over like a Willy the Wisp, and never settlin'?' he asked anxiously.

'No, indeed, father,' Denys assured him earnestly. 'I shall settle down with you after this. There is no place I love better than the place where you are.'

'Ah, that's kindly said, boy,' the old man returned, with a gratified look. 'Still, for all that, I don't know that the Murrough Farm will ever content you any more. I'm not grudgin' you all his lordship did for you. Still, I couldn't expect to get back my boy, that used to be happy with old Rory, wanderin' the fields or dreamin' on a sunny bank, or under a wall if the wind was cold.'

'Before I drained the Little Bog. I was a lazy young dog in those days.'

'Twas only that you were dreamin' your dreams. Your mother had the second sight. You saw more than we thought. I'm very proud of you, Denys, but I don't know that ever I was happier than when ye were young and careless and I grumblin' at ye. My tongue might be bitter, but my heart was soft to ye.'

As they drove home Denys explained to his father his suspicions about the pictures, that they were something really good and valuable which had been laid away and forgotten as time passed. He had been unable to persuade that cynic, George Armstrong, that the pictures could have any value.

'There isn't a thing in it that isn't an old daub,' Armstrong had said decisively. 'Haven't I been doin' business for the Leenanes these five-and-thirty years and my father before me? Is it likely that if there was anything any good I wouldn't know about it. If it was for a spec you bought them old things, you'll be done in the eye, my boy.'

'Them Armstrongs had always too much ould chat out of them,' Pat Fitzmaurice said in affront, when this was repeated to him. 'But sure there's no use mindin' George Armstrong. He has coarse ways with him, an', as the sayin' is—"What can you expect from a pig but a grunt."'

Denys spent a couple of hours of the afternoon in making the pictures as safe as possible between boards wrapped in canvas. He was rather pleased with his handiwork when he had finished, and carried down the workmanlike parcel he had made of it to show to his father, who pronounced it very neatly done.

‘As Maggie was sayin’,’ he said—Maggie was the old housekeeper who had been nurse to Denys when he was a baby—‘you’ve taken no harm from being a gentleman.’

He sat and smoked his pipe, talking quietly, while Denys made a substantial meat tea, which might be his last meal before breakfast next morning, and his blue eyes beamed approval on his son.

‘If it was to be you made a bit on the pictures,—I’m not saying you will; fifty pounds was a lot to give for them—what would you do with it?’ he asked presently.

‘My idea is, if the pictures have value, to hand them over to Lord Leenane. I am his agent, and I bought them in for him, not for myself. If they are not valuable and he does not want them, they would look very nice on that wall there.’

‘You’ll never make a business man, Denys,’ the father said, with a long suck at his pipe. ‘You’re too good-natured.’

‘You shall see,’ Denys answered. ‘Wait till I begin to drain the Big Bog, out beyond the trees that used to stand with their feet in the water and stand now on solid ground.’

‘Glory be to goodness, what are you thinkin’ of, boy? Drain the Big Bog! Why, it is a couple of miles square, runnin’ along to the foot o’ the mountains!’

‘With the Murrough River, a fine natural drain, running right through it. The river wants cleaning up.’

Pat Fitzmaurice looked at his son as though he thought much learning had made him mad. ‘An’ what would the poor people do for their little turf banks?’ he asked.

It was time for Denys to be off, so he postponed the discussion to a future day. His father drove him to the station. As his train ran out he caught sight of the little mare mounting the hill from the station. He thought his father's figure on the side of the car had a lonely, dejected look.

'I shall leave him no more,' he said to himself. 'Where I go, he goes. But, since he would hate to leave Murrough, it is a good thing I am going to find plenty to do there.'

He crossed to Holyhead by the morning boat. All through the long journey he kept the case with the pictures constantly under his observation. They might be, as George Armstrong had said, daubs; on the other hand, they might have value. Anyhow they were not his, but in his keeping; he must see that no harm befell them.

He slept at the hotel with a locked door, and carried the parcel to the dining-room where he breakfasted. He himself placed it in the hansom which awaited him. It was not quite ten o'clock when he arrived at the famous salerooms of Messrs Miller, Hardy and Hodge. They had been watering the streets and the pavements were yet sprinkled. The streets were full of hurrying people on their way to business, and the shops were but in process of window-dressing. There was a feeling as of early morning freshness over London.

The young man at Miller, Hardy and Hodge's, who was just taking off his hat, received Denys with an air of offence, which deepened when he asked to see one of the principals.

'Mr Hodge *may* be in by eleven o'clock,' he said: 'Mr Hardy is in Rome: young Mr Miller is still at Eton.'

There are several people to see here before you can reach the principals.'

'I shall wait for Mr Hodge,' Denys replied calmly.

'Oh! I suppose you know your own business best. Mr Hodge only sees important clients. Don't mind my telling you.'

'I may be an important client,' said Denys. 'I've a couple of pictures to show him. I've heard he's an expert.'

'An expert! Why, he discovered the Vasari forgery when all the experts of Europe pronounced it genuine. If all the people who thought they had finds in the way of pictures or curios were to see Mr Hodge there'd have to be a thousand of him. See Mr Forbes—here he comes!'

Denys was inclined to say that he would wait for Mr Hodge or take his pictures elsewhere, but Mr Forbes glanced at him, and it was a friendly, kindly glance. He decided to see Mr Forbes. He had to wait till Mr Forbes was ready, and waited in a very hot little room lit by a lantern overhead. The walls were hung with portraits of members of the famous firm—the first Mr Hodge had a bag-wig and a snuff-box, and his portrait had been painted in kit-cat by Sir Joshua Reynolds,—and some of its most famous clients. The morning papers were on the table, and a number of things well worth the looking at were scattered about the room.

He had not long to wait till he was summoned to the room where Mr Forbes sat at the end of a long mahogany dining-table and looked up from his writing to smile as Denys came in.

'You've something to show me,' he said.

'Portraits—from an old house in the West of Ireland.'

'Ah: not so much picked over as other places. They've been too proud to sell as a rule. Let me have a look!'

He helped Denys to undo the packing and drew the pictures to the light. As they came into view his expression changed. It had been kindly but subtly discouraging. He did various odd things now. He pursed his lips out and drew them in again with a sibilant sound. He whistled softly. He moved the pictures hither and thither, to get the little light upon them. He walked to and fro, always with his face turned towards them. He had an air of worshipping the pictures.

Denys watched these performances anxiously, but Mr Forbes said nothing. After a while he went towards the bell and touched it.

'If Mr Hodge has come in, ask him if he will please to come up here,' he said to the clerk.

'Mr Hodge has just come in, sir. I will tell him.'

Mr Hodge was in the room a few minutes later, a man with a country-squire face, weather-beaten and jovial. He brought a smell of the country with him, and he wore violets in his coat.

'Good-morning, Mr Forbes,' he said. 'A beautiful morning. You wished to see me?'

He looked from Mr Forbes to Denys with an inquiring eye. So this was one of the men who are institutions rather than men, they represent so much that belongs to the life of England. He spoke with what Denys had heard called 'an English accent.' Eton and Oxford were in the slow, musical intonations.

The pictures were not in his view.

'This gentleman,' said Mr Forbes, 'has brought some pictures to be valued—or sold?'

He turned an eye on Denys.

'That remains with the owner,' said Denys.

'I want your opinion, sir,' Mr Forbes said, with respect, and placed the portrait of the old lady where Mr Hodge could see it.

'Raeburn, by Jove,' said Mr Hodge, 'and a notably beautiful example.'

CHAPTER IX

THE OTHER SIDE

THE portraits were left in charge of Messrs Millar, Hardy and Hodge, safely locked in their strong room. Mr Hodge had given an opinion as to their value.

‘The Godwin Raeburn, sold six years ago, fetched twenty-five thousand pounds. These are no whit behind that.’

Denys breathed freely when the pictures were out of his keeping. The day was still young. Lord Leenane had a permanent address at his club. There Denys was informed that his lordship was out of town. He was at Melvern Wells.

He had just missed a train. There were two or three hours to be got through before the next. He got into a hansom and went off to Stratfield Place, where he found Mrs Aarons in her little garden taking up the bulbs which had done flowering. She pulled off her gardening gloves to shake hands with him, and accompanied him into the house. She was unfeignedly glad to see him, although only a few days had passed since they had last met. He felt moved to apologise to her for his impulsive coming, and she said in her beautiful voice, with its hint of foreign accent: ‘But that was so kind: it is that I thank you for, that you were sure you would be welcome.’

‘I have to see Lord Leenane at once,’ he explained.

'and I find he is at Malvern. There is a train at three o'clock which will take me there without a long wait at Birmingham.'

'I knew there was something to excite you,' she said placidly. 'That will give you time for a lunch with me. I have sent Mr Aarons away for a few days. He is not well. He overworks. If you will come and do my marketing with me—I shall not ask you to carry a basket—it will be most kind. It will not be amusing, I know. You may wish to entertain yourself otherwise. You will have to lunch with me all alone. Shall you mind?'

'I shall love it,' said Denys, and meant what he said.

'I might ring up Captain Arundel, perhaps,' she suggested, with a side-long glance at Denys.

'Oh, no, no,' he said hastily; 'that would spoil everything.'

'Ah, you do not like him,' she said sorrowfully. 'My husband does not either. He must present a different side of him to me. I should like to show you . . . some letters he has written to me when he has been away. There is nothing private, though much that is personal. I want him to be liked.'

She had led Denys into a slip of a room beyond the music-room, the existence of which he had not suspected. The door hid itself in a white and gold panel of the wall, in the shadowy corner by the organ. It was a little boudoir, sacred, Denys felt sure, to greater intimacies than obtained in the more public rooms. There was a signed portrait of the King on the mantelpiece and one or two of foreign royalties. The room was austere furnished; the polished floor had one exquisite Persian

rug laid upon it; there were a few delicate bits of Sheraton—a spinet stood open, and the song on the music-stand was 'My Mother Bids Me Bind My Hair.' There were many violets and lilies of the valley in the room, which was very delicately scented. The window was open behind the blinds, and the lace curtains stirred in the little breeze that came in.

'You will wait for me here,' she said, 'while I make myself ready for the marketing. I shall not be very long. Meanwhile I wish you to read one or two of the letters I spoke of.'

She opened a bureau under a tall slender bookcase, and from a receptacle, shut off by a little door, she took out a bundle of letters. Denys noticed with a certain surprise that the receptacle, standing among open pigeon-holes, was such as one might keep one's most important or precious papers in.

'You are to glance over them while I am away,' she said. 'They are from Captain Arundel—written during the South African War. You knew he was out there? He was only twenty-two when he went out; now he is thirty. I know he does not look it. He is so very fair.'

Denys reflected that before twenty-two Hilary Arundel had managed to get into the moneylender's hands, and as though she detected the thought, Mrs Aarons said:—

'He was very young. A rich relative had sent him to Eton and accustomed him to all sorts of extravagances, then died without leaving him enough to live on in the way he was accustomed to live. He got into debt and came to my husband, who gave him a good wiggling and turned him over to me. Then the

war came, and he went out and acquitted himself splendidly. He will have to marry an heiress, though, for he has nothing.'

She smiled a queer, wistful smile, looking back at him over her shoulder as she went towards the door.

She stayed away long enough to make Denys suspect that she gave him time to read the letters. He did it with some distaste, feeling he had no right to read them. But, after all, Mrs Aarons had assured him there was nothing private. As he went on his interest grew, half-unwillingly. The letters were vividly, even brilliantly written. After all, he might have known, he said to himself, that the affection of such a woman as Rachel Aarons could not have been taken by the cold fop he had thought Arundel to be.

But the thing that surprised him most was the attitude of the writer's mind towards Rachel Aarons and his expression of it. Denys would have said off-hand that Hilary Arundel would care nothing for a woman no longer young. On the contrary, the letters breathed a worshipping affection. Such letters might have been written to a queen by a devoted subject.

Were there two men in Hilary Arundel? he asked himself, and wondered which side he had shown to Dawn Finucane.

Mrs Aarons came into the room, dressed in a beautifully-cut gray coat and skirt for a practical morning. She smiled at him as she took up the bundle of letters he had laid down on the table.

'Well?' she asked, and again her expression was very wistful.

'They are quite unlike what I would have expected. They are very clever. More than that, they have heart.'

'Ah, I am glad you found that out. I hoped you would. You will meet his sister at lunch.' I have rung her up. She will teach you a little more about him.'

Denys had not known that a morning's shopping could be so pleasant. Perhaps because he was so little used to the society of women it was very pleasant to him to be associated in so intimate a way with such a charming and gracious woman as Rachel Aarons.

She shopped at Harrods, and did her shopping in the most thorough way. To see her selecting the things she wished to buy was a lesson in careful housekeeping. Once or twice she turned and smiled at Denys, as though conjecturing his amusement.

Going up and down the departments and in the lifts they met many people with whom Mrs Aarons exchanged greetings. Some of them looked curiously at Denys, who was laden with Mrs Aarons's smaller purchases, and enjoying it immensely. He had an amused feeling that they must think he had been going the pace, as apparently most of Mrs Aarons's protégés had been.

Once, as they crossed a department sacred to mysterious things in lace and muslin at which Denys glanced and averted his eyes, they came upon a pretty thing. It was a little girl about four years old. She was dressed enchantingly in a white satin frock with mittens and wore an immense bonnet, the front of it filled in with roses. On the little white satin feet were two

pink roses and one hand carried a muff of white velvet with a pink rose laid upon it.

The young ladies of the department were gathered around, frankly adoring. A plain-looking but pleasant nurse was explaining that the little girl was on her way to be photographed. As they caught sight of the pretty thing, a woman passing by stooped and kissed the little cheek. The child, who was probably having more of an ovation than she altogether liked, looked up at her nurse with a bewildered air and her delicious outward-turning lip trembled like the full lip of a snap-dragon.

Rachel Aarons stood still and extended her arms, and the child, after one glance, ran into them and hid her face against the motherly breast. Denys stood by a little shyly, thinking how charming it was, nevertheless embarrassed, as though by a scene.

'Ah! she is tired!' Mrs Aarons said to the nurse, and her voice was softer than rose leaves.

'She is, ma'am,' said the nurse. 'She's little to be made such a fuss of. But I've done my business here now, and I'll be getting on.'

'She is going to be photographed?'

'Yes, ma'am.'

'Where?'

The nurse mentioned the name of a famous artist in photography, whose studio was in Kensington Square.

'I shall drive you there; it is on my way home.'

The nurse thanked her in a bewildered way, and they went down in the lift and out of the shop to where the carriage waited. All the time Mrs Aarons carried the child, who had flung little fat arms upwards to embrace the lady's neck. The nurse protested vainly

that Nancy could walk very well, but Nancy did not seem inclined to walk nor Mrs Aarons to put her down.

Nor did they lose Nancy when the studio was reached. Having ascertained from the nurse that Nancy's parents lived in St John's Wood, and that they intended to go home by various buses, Mrs Aarons discovered that she had a good slice of the morning still on her hands, and decided to stay and see the photograph taken and afterwards to drive the child, who had had quite enough of the crowded morning, home. She gave Denys his choice of returning in the carriage to Stratfield Place with various purchases which were required for lunch and sending the carriage back, or waiting where he was.

He decided to wait where he was, and enjoyed very much indeed seeing Nancy photographed in a little garden room, where she fell into the most delicious poses, anticipating every wish of the photographer. Nancy, getting over her first alarm and fatigue, was merry, and Rachel Aarons was merry with her. That was something Denys could not have suspected, the essential child in the gracious woman. The fairy peals of the child's laughter were answered by the deeper, richer laughter of the woman.

After the photography was over they drove the child and nurse to the house in St John's Wood, which was retired in a garden.

'Please tell the baby's mamma that I am coming one day to see Nancy,' Mrs Aarons said, when they had deposited the two at the little green gate. Say that Madame Alba—she will know the name perhaps—has fallen in love with Nancy.'

'Nancy is going to have a doll as big as herself,' she said to Denys, as they turned the corner of the road and were out of sight of the vigorously-waving Nancy.

Already the light was dying out of her face and from her eyes, and something of a wistful sadness was taking its place. But she was very merry when at lunch she repeated the story of Nancy to Mary Arundel, laughing at the little girl's sallies and jests.

Denys liked Mary Arundel, who had little resemblance to her brother beyond her extreme fairness. She was a somewhat heavily-built girl, of a greater amplitude than ought to have been at her age. Her fair hair escaped untidily from her close-fitting hat and made an aureole round her face. Her clothes were shapeless;—and yet she had both charm and distinction. As she talked she panted a little: and she seemed unable to pronounce the letter 'r,' so that she talked of 'Hilawy' and Mrs 'Aawons.' She had small, even teeth like a child, and fine gray eyes under the tumbling confusion of her hair. Altogether Denys found her very pleasant.

It was obvious that she adored her brother, and, incidentally, that he was a devoted brother.

'Hilawy wants me to go to Huwlingham with him to-morrow,' she said. 'I told him I would not go if those wretches'—she made a violent effort and brought out the 'r' with a roll like the French 'r'—'the Kinnersley girls were of the party. I've told Hilawy I simply cannot endure them, and he laughed and said neither could he, for the matter of that. He will flirt, silly boy!'

Denys remembered the bold-looking, handsome girls at the Opera.

They flirt so,' Mary Arundel went on. 'I cannot

endure their flirtations with Hilawy, who, poor boy, has to mawwy money, and so have they, of course, the wretches! I don't know where Lady Hebe gets the money fwom, but they go ewewywhere, and get their dwesses from Paquin.'

Again, she was very candid about her brother's temper. Something had gone wrong on an occasion, and Miss Arundel said, describing it,—

'You know, I weally think the busby affected poor Hilawy's temper more than anything. Such a bore having to wear it. He was simply fwightful, Mrs Aawons. I was quite fwightened of him. Only, you know, when he is weally most dweadfully alarming he begins to laugh at himself and then he is simply adowable, and you forgive him ewewything.'

'You should see that brother and sister together,' said Mrs Aarons, as she drove Denys to Paddington; 'you would know how much of good there is in Captain Arundel. He would leave the most beautiful and most important woman in London for his sister. It is pretty to see them dancing together. Hilary criticises all the women's frocks, never discovering that Mary dresses like a rag-bag.'

There was certainly something of good in Hilary Arundel. Denys could not doubt it after reading those letters, and he had been greatly taken with Miss Arundel's simple and unaffected ways, and her sense of humour where her adored brother was concerned.

Oddly enough, he was not sure that he was quite pleased at Hilary Arundel's rehabilitation with himself. He had made up his mind to detest him. He did not want to be robbed of his antipathy.

CHAPTER X

DENYS RENDERS AN ACCOUNT

THE westering sun was on the Malvern Hills as Denys approached them, jogging in a fly for a few miles through an enchanting country of May-bloom and fresh greenness, singing waters, the bleating of sheep and lambs, the calling of the plover. The hills stood up green and wooded to their heights as he had not known them in Ireland, where the mountains recede as one approaches them and one is caught into their mystery before he is aware.

Here the hills were kind, comfortable, approachable. Far off they had the mist of distances, but as one came nearer all that fell away and one saw the sides of the hills dotted with houses set in gardens 'enamel'ed,' as the old poet puts it, with many brilliant flowers. The house, overlooking thirty miles of exquisite country that stretched to where Severn glided to the sea, which the driver of the fly indicated as the one Denys was in search of, sat in a garden so tightly packed with flowers that it was a blob of colour on the green hill-side.

He got out at the foot of an immensely steep hill and walked up through a dark tunnel of trees before he emerged on the open road for 'Mimosa.' There it was—a tall, rather toppling white house, with the garden below and beside it, a wonderful view of the Vale and

Bredon Hill in the distance. The nightingales were singing although it was still broad daylight as he walked under the pale green trees, and below there was a chorus of running waters mingled with the sounds of flocks and herds and the calling of birds. It was an enchanted country. All the scents of May were in his nostrils as he stood at the hall door of 'Mimosa' waiting to be admitted. The platform on which he stood before the hall spanned an abyss some thirty feet deep, so swiftly did the hill at this point run down to the plain. He had noticed that on the side next the road the house showed only two modest stories, while at the back the lowest of four stories was on a level with the highest garden beds.

The door was opened by a respectable, gray-haired man, obviously a butler. Is there any occupation that so stamps itself upon him who practises it? He received Denys with a fine blend of respect and haughtiness, and showed him into a long, very pleasant room, with a low window at the farther end overlooking the beautiful stretch of country.

The room had only one occupant, Lord Leenane, who was sitting in a rather dejected attitude, doing nothing apparently but looking straight before him when Denys entered.

He sprang to his feet and the boredom fell from his face like magic, leaving behind it a cheerful excitement.

'Hallo!' he said. 'This is decent of you, Denys. I was just wishing I might see some one from home.' He had been about four days away from Ireland, but he talked as though the days had been years. 'You never saw such a place. It's worse than Tunbridge Wells, for that, at least, has a good train service to London.'

'It is a beautiful place,' said Denys, catching a glimpse of the 'enamel'd' plain and the distant prospect of hills outside the window. It was a very pretty window—early Georgian, with the many panes round instead of flat, as in their modern imitations.

'Now don't get talking like that,' said Lord Leenane peevishly. 'That is like my sister and Dawn. Sophie's happy as long as she's got a church at hand. She's always saying her prayers. Dawn is out climbing the hills with old Monk to take care of her: you remember Monk, the bull-terrier. Lumbering brutes, only good for guards, I think them, though I am fond of Monk. Give me a good shooting dog. You remember Fly, the little spaniel I had at Clogher. She died after you left us—picked up poison. Egad, when I came home and found instead of Fly a little mound in the grass, I was as sick a man as ever you saw.'

Denys remembered the dogs. There had been a good many of them at Clogher. He remembered Monk on the hearthrug, his silky side heaving in sleep, and little Fly doing her pretty tricks and being rewarded by a dole of biscuits.

'Ah, I'm sorry about Fly,' he said. 'I hadn't heard.'

'No; people don't bother to talk about a dead dog. It often means more to the dog's owner than the death of a man. If Fly was here now she'd be making me die laughing going through her tricks. Well—it's just as well, perhaps.' He heaved a tremendous sigh. 'I wouldn't have much work for Fly in a place like this. She might have turned poacher, by Jove.'

Denys said again that he was very sorry for Fly, and felt it.

'You've come in the nick of time,' said Lord Leenane.

'I was feeling suicidal. Now, it occurs to me to ask what the deuce brings you here? You can't have come on the business of the agency. That may be trusted to take care of itself. By the way, why did you bolt while we were at Clogher. I called over to see you, but on the way I dropped in at Drum Station to pick up a parcel, and some one told me you'd gone to England. You went gadding very soon after I'd made you my agent. How did you come to track me down here? Never mind the phrase: I'm deucedly glad to see you. All parsons and old women here: just as bad as Tunbridge Wells. See what I've come to. Egad, only for Dawn's sake I'd as soon be dead.'

'I returned home just in time to miss you. We must have passed each other by between Euston and Holyhead.'

'And you've come back again? You *are* a rolling stone, man. If I could stay in Ireland I'd stay in it. Best country in the world for a poor man; in fact, the only country.'

'I wanted to see you, and, luckily, you had left your address at your club.'

'You wanted to see me?' A dark cloud of suspicion came down on Leenane's blue eyes and the cheerful candour of his face.

'If you want to squeeze the people, to put up the rents on them when the leases fall in, I'm dashed if I'll consent. The Finucanes were never rack-renters. I say No—and I stand on it. I suppose old O'Connell Jones is still at it with his tenantry, boycotting and emergency men and all the rest of it. I'd let 'em shoot me if they wanted to rather than ask protection like O'Connell Jones.'

'I haven't heard there were any new developments there,' said Denys; 'the last I heard was that the emergency men had flung up the job, and the old man was doing the work himself with the assistance of his old housekeeper and a half-witted boy.'

'Dashed old fool!' said Lord Leenane, and then his tone changed.

'Now, there's a tragedy if you like! Old O'Connell Jones's squabbles with his tenantry have gone on for thirty years. They killed his wife and drove his only daughter into a convent. His son never comes back. He's got the run of a kitchen in Yorkshire—I believe she's a lovely girl, and Walter deserves her and the money as well—a fine, straight, handsome fellow. He was brought up with the people, and he hates the whole business, and there's poor old O'Connell Jones thinking he's keeping the place for Walter, and fighting with the people like the devil because he won't abate a jot of Walter's rights. Walter will never come back. He told me so. He's a popular man in Yorkshire and manages his wife's property. He loves to be at peace with his fellow men—that's his sort. Not likely he'd come back to an old rat-trap of a house and a poor, impoverished estate that his father and the tenants between them have been playing the devil with for twenty years.'

'I didn't think of putting up the rents,' said Denys. 'Most of the land in the West of Ireland ought to carry no rent. People ought to be paid for living on it.'

'Nice sentiments for my new agent,' said Lord Leenane, with a grin. 'Well, if you didn't come for that, what did you come for? Not for love of my beautiful eyes, hey?'

At this moment the servant who had opened the door brought in a tea-tray, very well plenished.

'Tell Mrs Simmons that Mr Fitzmaurice will stay with us for a few days. She's to get a room ready for him. Plenty of room in this great big house, Fitzmaurice. Don't talk of hotels. Tell Mrs Simmons to give him a room on the country side of the house. The other side is deucedly depressing with the hill blocking up your windows so you can't breathe. Very different, these little foothills, from our mountains—hey. What price the Reek and Nephin? I haven't had a breath of air since I came here.'

The servant had gone out of the room with a flat-footed softness, closing the door behind him.

'Now there's a fellow who has lived ten years at Clogher and never lost his Cockney speech,' Leenane said, after the closing door. 'Mrs Simmons is a colleen, though she's forty years old. Wavy, dark hair and blue eyes, with a brogue it would do your heart good to hear, and a complexion of milk and roses. They have a very comfortable boarding-house here. Everybody in Malvern lives by taking everybody else as lodgers. No one here just now but ourselves. I hope Bridget Simmons is not refusing lodgers on our account. She cooks like an artist or a Frenchwoman, so she's always full. I don't see myself with other lodgers, or at least the kind that come to Malvern.'

Denys seemed a long time in getting to the point. He had indeed so much and such startling things to tell that he hardly knew where to begin. A strange diffidence had come upon him.

He poured himself out a cup of tea and ate some hot

tea-cakes while Lord Leenane watched him with an air of amused disgust.

'You wouldn't like a whisky and soda better?' he asked. 'There it is on the table by your elbow. No? Young fellows are changed since my day. I'll tell you what, Denys. If the Irish ever give up drinking whisky they'll become like Englishmen, and that, in my opinion, would be the worst calamity that could befall them. Those things you are going to eat are called crumpets. Only parsons can digest them. I've seen a parson eat fifteen since I've been in this place, and wash 'em down with a gallon of tea. Simmons doesn't bring me such muck: he knows better.'

Denys plunged *in medias res*, dismissing the subject of the tea and crumpets.

'The day after you were good enough to give me your confidence, Lord Leenane,' he said, 'I went over to London and saw Mr Simon Aarons.'

'The deuce you did!' exclaimed Leenane, staring. 'What the devil made you do that, and what did you expect to get by it?'

'I got what I expected,' said Denys sturdily. 'He knocked off the interest and accepted a thousand pounds in payment of the debt.'

'I suppose it's a mere trifle to you, young man, that I haven't got a thousand pounds! If the auction brings four hundred pounds I'll be lucky!'

There was a certain ominous quietness in his voice, as though he was keeping his temper with difficulty.

'You'd better have let sleeping dogs lie,' he went on. 'I'll tell you something now that may be useful to you: you've got too much zeal. I remember old Hyacinth Casey, the Crown Prosecutor. They said he had a

hand in all the Government appointments in Ireland. He was a very good-looking fellow and a great man with the ladies. When a new official came to thank him for using a bit of back-stairs influence on his behalf, Hyacinth used to pat him on the shoulder and say, 'No zeal, my boy! Remember—no zeal! There are more men walking Grafton Street barefoot this day from too much zeal than ever laziness brought to their case.'

'I paid the money,' said Denys doggedly.

'Where did you get it from, may I ask?'

'From my father. I owed you more than that, Lord Leenane.'

'You owed me nothing at all. Just a little transaction between gentlemen. You paid me by being a credit to your schooling. So you've picked your father's pockets for me! How did you get round old Simon? Through Mrs Simon, hey? I never met her. I found Simon himself as hard as nails. I didn't want any favours from him. What did you do it for?'

He suddenly flashed at Denys.

'No nonsense about my daughter,' he said. 'I won't have Dawn live in poverty. The man that asks for her must bring fifty thousand pounds in his hand, at least. I've had enough of dragging the devil by the tail.'

Denys turned a deep, painful red. Mentally he had a picture of himself in his rough, farming clothes, sitting on the sunny side of the ditch the first day he ever laid eyes on Dawn Finucane. He had looked down at his hands that day to find his nails broken and dirty, and he had thrust them into the pockets of his old coat hastily, but he had never been sure that she had not seen them. Her young imperious eyes had looked at him as though she would say: 'Boy, why are you so

dirty and unkempt?' So the vision of her that day remained with him over the years.

He stammered that he should not think of lifting his eyes so high.

'Tut!' said Lord Leenane. 'It's plain to me that you're not in society, Denys.' The use of his Christian name had a reassuring, comfortable sound to Denys's ear. 'There's hardly a beauty so highly placed and so fastidious that a dirty fellow with money may not aspire to possess her. Mind, I'm not saying the girl would have him nor that her parents wouldn't tell him to get out. But, as a rule, a fellow with money can go anywhere, no matter how dirty he is. You're clean, Denys, and you're a gentleman. The schooling hadn't much to give you. The gentleman was there. Fitzmaurices of Murrough need touch the hat to no man.'

'Thank you, Lord Leenane,' said Denys, and felt that he loved the blue-eyed, bluff-spoken, honest gentleman.

'How the devil am I going to pay you off?' Leenane asked, looking at Denys with a considering eye. 'I can't leave your father's pockets empty. I'm obliged to you, Denys, but it might be as well to have left it. Aarons would have renewed—it's his business. Of course, he'd have bled me white—but, after all, there's not much he could take. Well, well, it was kindly done, Denys, my boy, and I'm grateful to you and your father.'

Denys stumbled over what he had to say further. It was ridiculous. If he could have imagined himself announcing to Lord Leenane that he was the owner of two pictures valued at fifty thousand pounds he could only have seen himself as a joyous messenger of good tidings. Now he found a queer difficulty in telling the story.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRINCESS

‘WHAT did the sticks sell for?’ asked Lord Leenane. ‘Was Patsy Hynes in good form and did the whole countryside turn out? Did my friends stand by me and prevent the things going for nothing?’

‘I bought in some things,’ said Denys—‘things you must have forgotten. There was Lady Leenane’s harp—George Armstrong often saw her playing it, and some drawings by your mother.’

‘Thank you, Denys. I wonder how I came to forget them. I did it in such a deuce of a hurry. I’ve always been too impetuous, Denys. More hurry, worse speed, says the proverb. You were a picture of slowness the first day I saw you, yet you drained the bog, a thing no man ever thought possible.’

‘It’s very rich land,’ said Denys. ‘The half of the bog is not bog at all, but just land turned to swamp by the Murrough overflowing its banks. I’m going to reclaim on a bigger scale with your permission.’

‘Where’s the money to come from?’

‘Mr Aarons will advance it at six per cent.’

‘You’ve got the four-leafed shamrock, Denys Fitzmaurice. It’s a white man’s rate of interest, not a Jew’s.’

‘Mr Aarons is a white man.’

‘So you seem to have found him, and he’ll let you

have the money—to play ducks and drakes with? But no, you won't do that.'

'I hope not, Lord Leenane. By the way, I've something else to tell you.'

He realised a new cause for embarrassment. Mr Hodges had mentioned the sum of fifty thousand pounds as the probable value of the Raeburns, and Lord Leenane had said that his daughter's suitor must possess at least fifty thousand pounds. It was a coincidence, but Denys felt ridiculously shy of mentioning the amount.

'Out with it! You're too slow for me, Denys. The auction was a bad one. I'm prepared for that. I've lost my chairs and tables and I haven't a bed to sleep on, and the things have gone for nothing.'

'Mr Hynes thought the auction had made at least a thousand pounds. His accounts were not all in.'

'That's good. Why didn't you tell me that at first. A thousand pounds. Why, I'm rich! I'll pay off half my debt to your father and take Dawn over to Paris for a few weeks. You've no idea of what life here is like. D'ye see what's under the windows, Denys, my boy? A graveyard. Cats and dogs and an old horse or two and a marmoset. Look at their head-stones! The old people who lived here before Simmons bought it kept a houseful of animals. The old man left it in his will that he was to be buried among them, and the old lady followed suit. It was their own land and nobody could object. If you'll look round the corner you'll see an elegant tomb with a draped urn a-top of it. It gives me the blues. Simmons says the summer boarders like it. They like serious things, else they'd never come to Malvern. The books in this house would turn you sick. Sermons, every one of them.'

'Did you ever know that you happened to possess a pair of very valuable pictures?' Denys asked, when Lord Leenane paused for breath.

'I can't say that I did. What kind of pictures were they?'

Denys described the Raeburn ladies as well as he could, and Lord Leenane had a hazy memory of having seen them one day when he and his brother Hugh, long since dead, had gone seeking hidden treasure in a lumber room. Some one at some time must have left them there and forgotten their existence.

'They must have been put there in my grandmother's time,' he said. 'She lived to ninety-nine and she had the habits of a magpie.'

Denys went on to tell of the struggle between himself and Mr Levi from Westport for the possession of the pictures.

'I was bidding in the dark,' he said, 'for I really know nothing about pictures, but the blood was in my head and I'd have gone on bidding, and so would the Jew only for his being rammed by a young urchin of a boy in the stomach and knocked breathless.'

'That boy deserves to be encouraged. I hope you treated him decently.'

'It would have been aiding and abetting an assault,' said Denys dryly.

'Now, I'd have flung him a crown before I thought of that.'

'I did fling him half-a-crown for his ready tongue, not for his nefarious conduct.'

'That is your way of putting it. How much did you pay?'

'Twenty-five pounds apiece.'

Leenane's lips shaped themselves as though they whistled.

'A big price,' he said. 'It doesn't sound a bargain to me. What do you look to make out of them?'

Denys drew a long breath before speaking.

'Mr Hodge, of Miller, Hardy and Hodge, says they are by Sir Henry Raeburn and of his best period. He said they might fetch fifty thousand pounds, even more, if you were willing to let them go to America.'

'*Fifty thousand pounds!*' Lord Leenane's voice was almost a shriek. '*Fifty thousand pounds* lying in a lumber room for no one knows how long, at the mercy of the damp and the rats and every confounded chance. Why, Hugh and I were as likely as not to cut them in strips with our new pen-knives that day long ago. I remember as though it were yesterday. We'd been presented with knives that were a whole tool chest in themselves. I remember getting whacked for cutting my initials on the oak panelling of the hall. Good Lord, what an escape! Are you sure, Denys?'

'Mr Hodge seemed very sure,' said Denys modestly.

'And the Jew might have had them only for that boy. I'll give him a good start in life. He must be a fine promising lad.'

Suddenly he whirled round on Denys.

'Funny my talking about fifty thousand pounds!' he said, with slight embarrassment. 'I congratulate you, Denys. I'd rather you had it than most men.'

'It's not mine,' said Denys stiffly, and with a sudden bright flush. 'It's yours, Lord Leenane, or it will be yours. What use have I for pictures? I bought them in for you, as your agent, as I bought the other things which I felt you had overlooked. They stand to your

name in Mr Hynes's book as they are deposited in your name with Messrs Miller, Hardy and Hodge. You will intimate to them if you wish the pictures to be sold.'

'God bless my soul!' said Lord Leenane piously. 'Here is a man with no use for fifty thousand pounds! Chucking it out of the window, by Jove! Will any one tell me if I'm standing on my head or my heels? You're a madman, Denys, my son.'

Denys blushed high with pleasure at being called Lord Leenane's son. He was tasting the delicious pleasure of rendering a great service where it was due and where he loved to render it. As for having no use for fifty thousand pounds, well, it dazzled him to think of the use he might make of it. Not that he looked as high yet as Dawn Finucane. She was a star in his sky and he worshipped her. He had not yet come to the point of considering that she could stoop to him. One so incomparable as she must have many adorers, many aspirants. When he thought of the adorers, in a world he did not enter, he felt the sword of jealousy turn in his heart.

'I'll make it up to you, Denys,' said Lord Leenane eagerly. 'I'll pay you a decent salary. Who knows but that together we'll pull the place out of the mire yet? It's fine of you, Denys. Plenty of men would have no scruple about keeping the pictures for themselves.'

'I was your agent,' said Denys. 'I owe you more than I am ever likely to repay.'

'You've given me a little bit on account, if Mr Hodge is right, and he's bound to be right,' Leenane said dryly.

Then his expression altered.

'You know what this means to me,' he said, and wrung Denys's hand. 'It means no more pigging it like this.' He waved his hand round the comfortable room with the beautiful view. 'It means that my hobnobbing with tabbies for the rest of my days is done. It means home for me and Dawn. I'll take no risks. I'll put the money in gilt-edged securities. I'll lock it up from myself so that I won't be chucking it away on mad schemes. It will keep me and Dawn in comfort and I'll have a bit to leave my girl when I die.'

There was the sound of the opening and closing hall-door and Dawn came into the room, bringing health and energy with her, Monk shuffling behind her. Her neck, rising from her bare throat, carried her golden head like a queen's. A bit of a song came to Denys's mind.

'My love is like a poplar tree
But not so aisy shaken, O!'

She had a proud virginal air, and she was as unconscious as a boy.

'Oh, Mr Fitzmaurice,' she said. 'I did not know you had come.'

She advanced with an outstretched hand.

'Take a good look at him, Dawn,' said her father. 'He's just chucked away a pile of money. To be strictly accurate he's put it into my pocket. It's the key of Clogher for you, Dawn, my girl. You'd never be happy with Clogher under the weather, empty and sighing for you, and the rats and the owls and bats to keep it company.'

Dawn, wide-eyed and beautiful and young, stared from one face to the other.

‘It only means—it is your father’s way of saying that I happened to buy in as his agent, at the auction, a couple of pictures, among other things, that have proved to be of great value. It was a mere accident, my knowing a very little about them, enough to know that in all probability they were good.’

‘Mr Levi, from Westport, knew all about them,’ broke in Lord Leenane, ‘only for Denys and the mercy of Heaven and a butting small boy, whom I shall take under my wing, the pictures would have fallen to Mr Levi, and I fear they would be his in law. You see what we owe to Denys.’

The flooding light of Dawn Finucane’s gaze made Denys wish that he might go through fire and water for her sake.

‘But . . . but,’ she said, ‘if Mr Fitzmaurice bought them, they are his, are they not, not ours.’

‘So I’ve said to Denys. He won’t hear of it. He says he did not buy for himself—he bought in for me such things as my carelessness had left to be sold. When it came to selling I thought I should never get out of the place. I hated the necessity for it. Think of your mother’s harp being left to be sold, and your grandmother’s pictures. Some of the furniture, too, Denys bought in. There is an old French bed of considerable value. It would have gone to a farm-house or to one of the Drum shop-keepers, if it had not been for Denys.’

Dawn still wore her air of wonder.

‘But,’ she said, ‘you talk of the key of Clogher. That would mean a deal of money. We should have

to put the place in repair. No pictures could do that for us.'

'Wait, miss, till you hear.' Lord Leenane rubbed his hands together gleefully. 'We shall spend ten thousand pounds in putting the house right, *ten thousand pounds*. After that we shall have forty thousand pounds left to keep the wolf from the door. Unless Denys is deceiving me, or Mr Hodge, of Miller, Hardy and Hodge, is deceiving Denys, the pictures will fetch fifty thousand pounds, perhaps more. *Fifty thousand pounds!*'

With the repetition, something came to his mind.

'By Jove!' he said, and winked solemnly at Denys. 'We are dealing in thousands these days. I wanted fifty thousand pounds to set you beyond the reach of poverty a little while ago, Dawn. I'll raise it. I want a hundred thousand. I'm a rich man now, for one of my simple habits. We'll settle down at Clogher, Dawn. We'll buy back what we can of the sticks. I don't regret selling them. Why, if I hadn't, the rats might have gnawed the Raeburn ladies and the rains washed them out. I can't realise it yet. It was a lucky day for you and me, Dawn, when we found Denys sitting on the sunny side of the bank waiting till the fairies sent him something to do.'

'How can we thank you?' Dawn said, in the voice for which Denys had found and discarded many comparisons—a beautiful ringing young voice, full of music.

Again Denys had the sense of being bathed in the effulgence of Dawn's smile.

'Denys is lucky, Dawn; he's lucky,' Leenane went on in his mood of exhilaration. He's going to make our fortunes beyond what he has already made for us.

He's like the boy in the fairy-tale: the boy in the fairy-tale always sat on the sunny side of the bank, playing on his flute or a tin whistle, before he went out to seek his fortune and came back a Prince. Denys was a Prince before ever he went. Not like Terence McGrath—he named a brilliantly successful public man—‘Terence was one of seven sons, and the father had four acres and three cows and a few sheep and pigs to make gentlemen out of them, for he had an ambition that way. He always said he didn't believe in softening his boys. So, as each one arrived at the age of fourteen, having finished his education at the National School, Tim McGrath called that boy to him and presented him with a map of the world for a sign of what he was to conquer, a loaf of bread for a provision till the conquest began, and a kick to send him on his way and harden him before the world began it. They've all done well, especially Terence, but you'd never call Terence a Prince. Not like Denys. Denys looks the Prince, eh, Dawn?’

Denys laughed and blushed. He thought to himself confusedly that if he was the Prince, who was the Princess? There could be none other than Dawn Finucane. She was a Princess, a Fairy Princess, from the top of her golden head to her little feet.

‘By the way,’ said Lord Leenane, ‘that was funny about the fifty thousand. Supposing you held on it, Denys, as you might have done, you'd have kept me to my word maybe. Maybe not.’

CHAPTER XII

A CASTLE IN AIR FALLS DOWN

LORD LEENANE would have it that they should all return to Ireland together. What matter that the pictures were not sold nor a date fixed for their sale! What matter if he had, as he expressed it, sold the beds under them at Clogher. He could replace the beds with something comfortable and sanitary. After that they could live without furniture beyond what Denys had bought in till they could begin to restore the house. It was a very good thing to have a house empty before beginning to restore it. The auction was a providential thing in every way. They had got rid of a deal of old rubbish and had found fifty thousand pounds.

Denys made a mental note as to where certain things sold at the auction were to be found; things he had associated in his own mind with Dawn Finucane's childhood and girlhood.

There had been a room, the contents of which he had longed to buy, but had been shy of Patsy Hynes's rolling black eyes, if he had ventured to ask him to buy them in. It had been obviously a girl's room, with a little white bed draped in curtains of faded blue silk, the furniture very old—a delightful oval Sheraton glass, in which he had imagined Dawn's face as it grew lovelier with the passing of the days

and years, a little bookcase, a beautiful old wardrobe, a blue carpet sprinkled with roses, a comfortable chair or two, and a sofa covered in old chintz. He remembered with gratitude that Patsy Hynes had bought in the contents of the room, saying he wanted them for the youngest of his girls, in a whisper meant only for Denys's ear.

'Maybe the little hussy won't be content with them,' he said. 'She has her heart set on a white suite from a Dublin shop, so maybe it's a flea in my ear she'll be giving me when I bring her this odd lot.'

That was hopeful. He resolved to write to Patsy Hynes at once. Perhaps he had not removed the things yet. Stay, he would wire! But no, he hardly knew how to make himself plain in the brevity of a wire.

He turned to shake hands with Mrs Metcalfe, who had to hear the whole wonderful story over again. To Mrs Metcalfe it was not at all strange. *Everything* happened for the best, even if it seemed for the worst; they always had the kind Hand over them. It was the Hand that had directed her brother to Denys, that day long ago, the Hand that had guided him when he chose Denys for his agent, one of the mad impulsive things, as it seemed to mere human intelligence, which he was in the habit of doing. She was very glad to go back to Clogher, although she would have been quite well content to stay where she was if it was the Will.

'You know you hated being dragged round the world, Aunt Sophie,' put in Dawn, 'and you are really devoutly thankful to be getting back to your garden and your bees and your poultry and all your poor people at Clogher.'

'I can improve the breed of poultry,' Mrs Metcalfe said, with a sigh, 'now that the old ones have been sold. I never could bear killing them off. Some of them must have been very old. It is a bad habit to give your fowl names and make pets of them, for you come to feel as though they were persons. And the bees too. I want to begin with the new hives. I am so glad I put in those new fruit-trees, and that I did not neglect the garden last winter. It will be in full beauty this year.'

Fortunately, I thought of keeping the garden gate and the greenhouses locked during the days of the auction,' said Denys. 'There was a big crowd. The people would have swarmed over everything.'

'I am very grateful to you, Mr Fitzmaurice!' Mrs Metcalfe said, with energy. 'I could not have borne to see the place trampled.'

'I brought the keys away with me by accident,' Denys said. 'You shall have them, Mrs Metcalfe.'

Denys agreed to wait on the general return. He could not, if he would, have torn himself from the presence of Dawn Finucane. They were all to go up to town the next day. Mrs Simmons was informed, and remarked merely that she had not thought his lordship would stick it long: it was very dull after the neighbourliness of Connaught. Simmons, as befitted his good training, merely bowed when he was informed of the new arrangements.

Dawn, congratulating herself that she had unpacked only what she needed to go on with, because she knew papa would never stand Malvern Wells, any more than he had been able to stand Bath and Cheltenham and Bournemouth and Tunbridge Wells, commanded

Denys to come out with her to bid farewell to certain darling things she had come to love—some people too. Denys was delighted, and still dazed with the happiness of being so approved by every one, particularly by Dawn.

‘Papa thought he could stick Malvern better than the other places,’ Dawn explained, as they went down the hill by which Denys had come, ‘because his mother had brought him to the Foley Arms at Great Malvern when he was quite a little boy and the morning after their arrival pulled up the blind that he might look out, “Now, my dear,” she had said, “you are looking at the very heart of England.” It really is that—Shakespeare’s England, Chaucer’s England, Merrie England. Do you see that old house there? Margaret of Anjou fled there after the Battle of Tewkesbury. They have Katharine of Aragon’s trunk there with K. R. and the crown upon it in gilt nails. It is really a wonderful country, apart from its loveliness; but the place is too churchy for papa. And it has so many different kinds of churchiness that, as he says himself, he never knows where he is.’

They visited a little farm-house, where they were received by a tiny woman who had the most gentle expression, Denys thought, he had ever seen in a human face. The garden in front of the little house was tight-packed with fruit and flowers and vegetables. A most delicious apple-tree, covered with deeply-pink blossoms, stood up in front of the open hall door. The stairs within and the sitting-rooms looked as if they had been newly scrubbed. Flowers were up to the windows, and the room in which they sat to taste Mrs Mason’s cowslip wine had a great pitcher of lilac on the table.

Denys had to see the little house, which was all fresh and delicious. There were quaint small altars on the stairs and in the rooms, each with its flowers and its votive lamp. Dawn called his attention to the fact that the two little altars on the stairs had very tiny figures, the one at the foot of the stairs being even tinier than the one at the first landing, while that at the head of the stairs was bigger than either.

'Mrs Mason's altars represent, according to Father Benedict, whose church is not far from us, Religion in its various stages, or the progress and evolution of Religion,' she said, and laughed: 'Isn't Mrs Mason a darling?'

He did not answer, because Mrs Mason appeared at the moment carrying a little basket.

'A few eggs for you, Miss Dawn,' she said. 'It isn't likely you will find eggs you could eat in London.'

The little woman watched them from her garden gate while they went up the hill, waving to them as long as she could see them.

There was another visit to the house which had sheltered Margaret of Anjou, where a lady in black received them, and they were entertained by two delightful little boys, one of whom sat clasping his bare knees in both hands, looking as though he listened to fairy music, till suddenly his whole face wrinkled, and he rushed from the room, his mother, his nurse, and a maid who happened to be in the room in hot pursuit.

The other boy, a placid, golden-haired child of five, remarked that Peter was going to be naughty.

'Peter is always quiet when he's going to be naughty.'

he said. 'Faver asked him one day to fink and not to talk. It were between two lamp-posts. When Peter goes for a walk wiv faver and muver he's not allowed to talk between the lamp-posts. When Peter comes to a post he shuts his eyes and holds on hard till he's said lots of fings. Peter said when faver asked him to fink: "I'd better not: I might fink of something rude." Once he said a fearful word out loud in the middle of the night, when every one but himself were asleep. He told Faver Benedict and he larfed. The word were "Bloomin'."'

The fair child, whose name was Paul, relapsed into silence after this bit of biography, and presently Peter was brought back struggling and laughing. He had played a trick on his anxious guardians, for the thing he had secreted in his fat fist and tried to throw into the lake was but a small china elephant, most indubitably his own, to do what he liked with.

'I told them it were my little elephant, Paul,' said Peter, with a smile of infinite zest. 'They didn't fink it were. They were all after me, and I frowed it, but it fell outside the water and Nanna picked it up. It weren't even broken.'

Paul grinned at the tale, but remarked sedately,—

'You are such a naughty boy, Peter, I wouldn't be s'prised if the Devil took you.'

'He's always talking about the Devil,' Peter explained, with bright eyes of amusement. 'He were pouring water in a hole in the garden one day, an' the gardener said, "Wotever are you a-doin' of, Master Paul?" and Paul said he were givin' the Devil a drink. He must be firsty.'

Peter and Paul's mother were a most helpless look

during this narrative. She was a pretty, pink and white, fluffy-haired young woman.

'They are *always* talking about the Devil,' she said. 'I don't know where they get it. I did forbid them mentioning his name, but they got other names for him, so as it seemed likely to lead to deceit, I thought I'd better let them talk openly.'

'Paul called the Devil Hammet sometimes, an' sometimes the Dear Man Laughin' at You. Nanna said it fair give her the creeps,' put in Peter, with his irresistible grin. 'She told him the Devil were only a Pome. Do you think the Devil's only a Pome?'

'They are really dreadful,' said Mrs Darrell. 'I don't know what their father will say when he comes home, expecting to find two good little boys.'

'Oh, faver will larf,' said Peter. 'He always larfs. So does Faver Benedict.'

'I wouldn't like the Devil to be a Pome,' said Paul, in a complaining voice. 'I like the Devil. When I were a kid I used to play games wif him round the bed-curtings at night. Nanna said it fair scared her. He were a very nice Devil. Oh, I don't want him to be a Pome.'

'Paul's goin' to cry,' said Peter, 'same as when he's got croup. Once he begins to cry he mightn't leave off till next Monday. Nanna says, "Oh, drat that child!" when Paul begins to cry. When he were a kid he never went asleep without his Golliwog, or else Tweedledum and Tweedledee, but he liked the Golliwog the best. He wouldn't have a new Golliwog when the old one died. He bawled and bawled and frowned the new one in the fire.'

Dawn, with the children, was a new revelation of

delight to Denys. She pealed with laughter, and got down on her knees to kiss the solemn Paul, her face red as a rose with enjoyment.

'Paul hates being kissed,' said Peter. 'He went to a house where there were six aunts. Each kissed him when he comed in: then they kep' walkin' round the table to kiss him. Then they all kissed him when he went away. Paul said he were kissed fifty hundred times. He were wipin' off the kisses for two years. He said there was a lady there, not an aunt, an' she hadn't shaved, an' she were drefful.'

Despite Paul's objection Dawn insisted on kissing him, and he bore it with a stoic patience, while his mother murmured that she never saw such a little boy; he used to be nice to kiss, but lately he had taken a dislike to it.

'Four's a kid, five's not,' said Paul laconically.

Dawn could hardly be torn away from Peter and Paul, but she left at last, having extracted a promise from Mrs Darell that she and Major Darell, who was coming home for a good furlough in the summer, and the little boys, would come and visit them at Clogher.

There was a third visit to a very ancient house, where an old lady and a middle-aged lady and a young lady sat in a room where the lamps were already lit, for the road outside ran under a tunnel of trees, and the house, panelled in dark oak, with little diamond-paned windows muffled up in ivy, was very dark. A fox terrier lay on the rug with his nose on his paws. Suddenly a light foot crossed the floor of the room overhead, and the dog, the hair rising along his back, retreated growling into a corner.

'It is our ghost,' said the old lady quietly. 'We only

hear her: we do not see her. But Tim does not like her. He always shows fear like that;’ and the conversation flowed on as though nothing had happened out of the way.

Then they went home to supper with a plan of getting up early in the morning so that Dawn should say farewell to the fields and the hills and the thousand streams of the Common, all the inanimate friends; and Denys was in felicity.

But before he fell asleep his castle of dreams was to be laid in ruins.

He and Lord Leenane sat up long after the ladies had gone to bed, with Monk lying between them. They talked of many things, and many schemes and plans were forecast and propounded. Leenane’s manner to him was almost as though he had been a son.

But at the last, while they stood for a final word, Lord Leenane said, with a hand on Denys’s shoulder:—

‘You remember what I said about Dawn and the fifty thousand? That was an odd thing. I’m afraid Dawn has arranged her own future, or will arrange it. I don’t quite know how far it has gone, and I don’t ask Dawn. But I don’t mind telling you, Denys, that I don’t like the man. We saw a lot of him last summer when Dawn came out, and he turned up the other morning at the hotel, and they went for a walk in Kensington Gardens, early, before the nurse-maids were about.’

‘Who is the man?’ Denys tried to make his voice sound natural and hoped he had succeeded.

‘A man named Arundel, in the Coldstream. Not a penny to bless himself with. I can’t go against Dawn. She’s my only child, after all; all I’ve left. This money

you've given me—yes, given me, Denys, makes things possible for her. You see—you've been doing it for Dawn.'

It was bitter. It was a knock-down blow. But Denys stood up to it. No one should know.

Afterwards Lord Leenane had his misgivings. He talked to himself as he went to bed.

'He showed breeding,' he said ; 'he showed breeding. I'm proud of Denys. What the deuce is there in Hilary Arundel that the women like?'

CHAPTER XIII

BOY'S LOVE

DENYS went through his ordeal next morning in a way that proved him worthy of Lord Leenane's commendations. He scaled the hill to the Beacon and looked over four shining counties from which the haze was just lifting. He walked in the fields where the grass was sewn thick with flowers and the corn-crake had begun his monotonous sawing, and by the purling streams. The fields were as wet as a river with the dews that seemed to make Dawn Finucane's eyes brighter and her colour lovelier. She was wearing a blue dress that matched her eyes, and gray stockings and shoes. Before they plunged into the deep grass she looked at him with a fearless eye.

'I shall ruin my shoes and stockings, if I wear them in the wet grass,' she said, 'and if you wear yours you will reduce the little boy who cleans our shoes to despair. I vote that we walk barefoot. It is so delicious walking in the wet grass barefoot.'

She sat down on a stile with her back to him and pulled off her shoes and stockings, after which she plunged into the lush, emerald grass which rose over her ankles. He had followed her example, and they went side by side, Monk following them, puffing and panting. Her little white feet made a soft squishing sound in the wet grass, and sometimes she kicked up a shower of silver that caught the reflections of the sun.

There was not a creature about till, as they were going homeward, they passed more than one party of tramps, who had slept out of doors and were making their toilets by a brook. The tramps were extremely affable. Dawn explained it by saying that they would have their breakfast, with sixpence added, at a great house of the neighbourhood which had given a meal to any who asked in the Name of God for many hundred years.

'No wonder they look at peace with mankind,' said Denys, and found to his amazement that he was exceedingly hungry and had really a desire for his breakfast. He would have liked not to be able to eat, and anathematised the animal side of him which could enjoy eating although his castle was down in ruins.

'By the way,' said Dawn to him suddenly, 'you have met a friend of mine in London lately.'

Her cheeks were suddenly red and the young man chafed and fretted at the knowledge, feeling horribly sore internally and that nothing mattered much in this world, despite the fact that he was hungry for his breakfast.

'Yes?' he said, coldly inquiring. He was not going to help her out.

'He is a Captain Arundel,' she said. 'His sister Mary is a very dear friend of mine.'

'I know. I met her at lunch yesterday before I came down.'

'Oh! You never told me!'

'I did not know you knew her.'

'Did you not talk of me then? She must have known that you were coming here.'

'She talked so much of her brother that we got very little further.'

'She adores her brother—and he her. It is pleasant to see such affection between sister and brother.'

'Yes;' he was not very encouraging.

'You met him at Mrs Aarons's house. *She* must be a very wonderful person.'

'She is—very wonderful.'

'Such an odd marriage—wasn't it?'

'Perhaps! Mr Aarons is a very remarkable man. They seem devoted to each other.'

'I hope to know her one day.'

She passed easily from the subject of the Aaronses, husband and wife, and began, with a little hesitation.

'Did you ever meet a Miss Barton there?'

'I did.'

'Pretty?'

'Charming.'

'Oh! More charming than most people?'

'Much. Rather like a dark rose.'

'How poetic!'

Dawn was visibly annoyed. She walked up the hill at a stiff pace, which left her panting a little at the top. It was a breathless hill, dark, a tunnel of trees. At the top she turned and faced him, her breast rising and falling under the thin muslin of her blouse.

'I believe Captain Arundel is devoted to Mrs Aarons,' she said.

'Very probably. I should think she wins devotion.'

'Of course, she is quite middle-aged—is she not?'

'Perhaps. A woman like Mrs Aarons has no age.'

They went on side by side, stopping now and again

to look over the wall, beyond which lay the great stretch of shining country.

'You cannot see Bredon,' she said. 'He has disappeared into the mists. A good sign for the weather.'

'Bredon?'

'Yes—Bredon Hill. Don't you know the poem?'
She lilted the song to herself in a soft undertone :—

'In summer time on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear
Round both the shires they ring them,
In steeples far and near,
A happy sound to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning
My love and I would lie
And see the coloured countries,
And hear the larks on high
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her
In valleys far away :
"Come all to church, good people,
Good people, come and pray!"
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer,
Among the springing thyme,
"Oh, peal upon our wedding
And we will hear the chime,
And come to church in time."

It was set to a poignantly sweet and melancholy music that caught in the clamouring bells and the shining

pastoral feeling of the Warwickshire Sunday morning. Denys felt the atmosphere of the poem as something unknown, unlike the bare bogs and mountain peaks he knew. He watched her as she sang, with a shy pleasure in the music she was making. There was not a creature in sight. They had met no one but the tramps and some school-children who had dipped to them, and had fondled Monk with a good fearlessness.

Her voice changed and became very sad :—

‘But when the snows at Christmas,
On Bredon top were strown,
My love rose up so early
And stole out unbeknown,
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,
Groom there was none to see,
The mourners followed after,
And so to church went she
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,
And still the steeples hum :
Come, all to church, good people,
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb.
I hear you, I will come.’

There were tears in her voice and in her eyes as she finished.

‘Thank you,’ he said simply. ‘I shall always remember the song of Bredon Hill.’

‘It is a lovely setting,’ she answered. ‘It makes a

difference looking across to Bredon that there is that song.'

They were in London by two o'clock and had lunch at the hotel, after which Lord Leenane and Denys set out to make their business call on Mr Hodge, of Miller, Hardy and Hodge. Leenane was still a little doubtful of his good-fortune and anxious to have the tidings of it confirmed. Since Denys had told him he had had alternating moods of confidence and doubt. Supposing Hodge was wrong! There was that fellow the other day, a famous expert, who pronounced a thing of lath and plaster under its composition, to be a bust by Praxiteles. Experts were wrong sometimes. The pictures might not be by Raeburn at all. They might be only clever copies, forgeries, frauds. He was hot and cold as he propounded these doubts. Denys was glad he was going to see Mr Hodge, a person who inspired confidence.

'I must have another opinion, or two or three, before I believe,' Leenane said, as they sat at lunch. 'Better know the worst. It would be a horrible thing to close your hand on fifty thousand pounds and find emptiness—eh, Dawn, my lass?'

'Would it matter so much?' asked Dawn.

There was something strange in her father's eyes as they rested upon her.

'Perhaps not, Dawn,' he answered soberly. 'Money is not always the best gift, nor can it buy the best, but it can do a good deal.'

They had taken a taxi. The taxi was yet new in London streets. Lord Leenane suggested that Dawn should go with them and wait on their interview with Mr Hodge if she did not care to be present, but Dawn

shook her head. The colour came to her cheek. Her eyes were hidden under the long lashes. Denys looked away from this confusion, this self-revelation. His mood was one of a chill and angry despair.

Lord Leenane pressed her no more. He was silent as he and Denys drove through the gay and crowded streets to Wellington Street. His eyes had a troubled look.

They dismissed the taxi when they arrived at their destination. Mr Hodge was in and disengaged. The interview was brief and eminently satisfactory. The pictures had already been seen by various art critics and eminent connoisseurs, who were agreed about them.

'Raeburns, and very splendid examples,' Mr Hodge said, with a slow kneading of his hands together. 'If they were mine nothing would induce me to part with them, although it is my business to sell, not to buy. I hope they may be bought for the nation. Some American will want to buy them as soon as we advertise, and will probably offer you a fancy price. It would be a pity if they had to go to America.'

They had tea with Mr Hodge in his private room. Lord Leenane was not elated as they walked into the street afterwards from the unpretentious old-fashioned building, which had altered little since the days of Queen Anne. He looked about him rather aimlessly as they stood a moment on the pavement. Then he came to a decision.

'Let us walk up to the National Gallery and see the Raeburns,' he said. 'I am, as perhaps you may have gathered, a faultlessly ignorant man about pictures. I should like to know what it is in a picture that can make it worth a fortune.'

But his inspection of the Raeburns was so perfunctory as to make Denys suspect that for some reason or other Lord Leenane wanted to kill time—perhaps also to talk, and had chosen a quiet place.

The gallery was almost empty this beautiful May afternoon. Far away one or two country visitors, catalogue in hand, walked from picture to picture. The noise of Trafalgar Square only reached their ears as a dull, far-off rumble.

They sat down on a seat side by side. Leenane suddenly revealed what was coming between him and his good fortune.

‘Dawn and I were always enough for each other. I am not enough for her now. It is hard luck when a man has only one little girl. I expect she is entertaining Arundel this afternoon.’

‘Don’t you see, Denys,’ he went on, ‘that this find of yours has made it possible? That is why I feel so deuced ungrateful. Arundel has not a red cent. on which to keep my girl, even if he was “All for Love and the World well Lost,” as I don’t believe he is. Upon my word, Denys’—he turned a sorrowful gray eye upon his companion—‘I am more than half inclined to hand you over the pictures and bid you sell them for your own purpose, not for mine. They’re yours, man—not mine.’

‘I bought them in trust for you,’ said Denys steadily.

‘I wondered if . . . you would fall in with it. Never mind! I fear my girl’s heart is engaged. Perhaps he is better than I think him, hey, Denys? Not a man’s man: a woman’s, perhaps.’

‘Perhaps they get below that foppish cold way of his which men dislike,’ Denys said, sticking passionately

to his loyalty to Dawn, even while his heart was chill and full of pain within him. 'Let me tell you, Lord Leenane; I ought to tell you. There is something in Arundel we do not see: he keeps it for women.'

He went on to tell as much as he could remember of the letters Mrs Aarons had shown him. He stumbled through the recital, conscious that he was not making much of a case after all for his rival.

'It doesn't seem much,' he concluded lamely. 'I haven't been able to get the atmosphere of the letters. I know when I read them I felt that he was a good fellow, on one side of him at all events.'

'I can't like him, I can't like him, Denys,' Leenane said, and shook his head sorrowfully. Denys said to himself that he was growing old. Something of pallor had descended on his ruddy hues; he looked flabby, out of sorts, as though he needed the open air and exercise.

'I'm glad we're going back to Ireland to-morrow, or the next day,' he said. 'I'd like the feel of a horse under me and a good gallop across the bogs. I am getting cobwebby.'

He rose up and shook himself like a dog.

'Let us go and buy a present for Dawn,' he said.

CHAPTER XIV

A LIGHT MAN

THEY returned to the hotel to find that all their killing time had been in vain. Dawn had had no visitors. She came downstairs to them from her room with a higher colour than usual and very bright eyes, and reproached them for having left her so long alone. Behind the high, smiling courage Denys conjectured tears and a throat that ached. He wondered at his own intuition. What did he know of the ways of girls?

Leenane was kindly, clumsily tactful. He refrained from asking how Dawn had spent her afternoon, talking, instead, of what he and Denys had been doing. Again with the queer intuition Denys was aware of the father's heart; that his hand could hardly refrain from going out to smooth Dawn's ruffled hair under the little green cap she wore, that his lips could hardly forbear tenderness.

It was nearly seven o'clock—too late to expect callers. From where they sat in the hotel lounge the entrance hall, with its glass-encased turnstile, was plainly visible. Every time any one came through Dawn gave a swift glance and looked away again.

Leenane suggested early dinner and a theatre. Dawn would not much longer have a chance of seeing a play. There was something very good on at the Ambassadors'. Or was there anything she would like to do better?

Dawn had no preferences. She was sweetly reasonable about doing what her father wished. The Ambassadors', then, be it. Denys went off to reserve three stalls. When he came back he was aware that something had happened. The buff-coloured envelope of a telegram lay on the little table in front of Dawn: the pink, flimsy was in her hand. Her face had lifted surprisingly. So! she had heard from Arundel.

'This is sad news of our friend Aarons,' said Leenane, as Denys came near. 'He was run down by one of those infernal new contrivances this afternoon near the Bank of England. I wish I'd been born before motors were invented.'

'Not killed?' said Denys, in a shocked voice. He was rather surprised at discovering how much concern the moneylender's accident caused him.

'Not killed, but badly injured. He'll be a loss to a good many people if he goes. I suppose he's rather unique as a moneylender.'

'It will be terrible for his wife,' said Denys; and began to think of the beauty and refinement of the moneylender's houses and of the gracious personality of the woman for whom they made the proper setting.

Dawn tried hard to keep the joy out of her face, but her relief was evident to the jealous lover, who suffered pangs while she talked cheerfully at dinner in her recovered ease of mind. He said to himself that Dawn could not have been very sure of Arundel since she had been so distressed by his absence. Then he reproached himself for the thought, trying to remember that Arundel must have very good qualities, since it was to him Rachel Aarons had turned in the moment of her necessity. The telegram had been

extravagant of words. 'Mrs Aarons has sent for me. I shall not be able to leave her so long as she needs me. We await the medical report to-night.'

Leenane grumbled over the telegram privately to Denys. It was like a man who had not two pennies to bless himself with, beyond the allowance some old lady gave to keep him in the Guards, to be so extravagant in telegrams.

'You may have noticed,' he said. 'He always wears the most extravagant things in flowers. His socks and neckties are things of beauty. He is dressed by Poole. Look at me! My clothes are made at home by the housemaid. I smoke fags. I look like an out-of-work.'

Denys smiled. Lord Leenane did himself less than justice, but he was not a dandy.

Dawn had come down to dinner wearing a frock of billowy white, all frills and flounces and ribbons and laces, from which her golden head and fair face, with the long, beautiful neck, rose like Aphrodite from the foam. Her little *décolletée* was exquisitely modest. The twist of seed pearls about the milky young neck enhanced its warm beauty. Denys was dazzled, but nevertheless asked if he might slip away while the curtain-raiser was on to get the latest report of Mr Aarons's condition.

'Yes, go, go!' Lord Leenane said heartily, and remarked to Dawn when Denys had left them that he had a good heart, a very good heart.

It was only a short hansom drive to Stratfield Place. The summer evening in London was full of gaiety, such a gaiety as was eclipsed when the lifeless motor took the place of the horsed vehicles. Strings of carriages and hansoms went up and down the West

End streets occupied by people smartly dressed, with happy faces, all going to functions of one kind or another. If Black Care rode any of the gay throng he was not in evidence.

Denys was caught into the westward-going stream. The eastward going passed him by. He hardly noticed the people who were close to him when there was a block in the traffic. They were all young and happy, it seemed. What a contrast! He was on his way to see a man who was probably dying in pain. He had talked enough with Mrs Aarons to know something of the misery of London. She had a philanthropic passion. What she said of the miserable lives was said eloquently, out of a heart that burned to help and redress.

Going down Oxford Street very slowly, for the street, still bathed in the westward-sinking sun, was thronged with vehicles; although the shops were shut and the foot passengers wore a homeward-going, absorbed air, Denys was aware that many of the hansoms that passed him contained a pair of lovers. He was aware of the clasped hands, the eyes directed upon each other, the glowing and happy faces that sometimes, for decorum's sake, tried to conceal the state of things. Other couples again were lovers unashamed. The hansom went smoothly for a few yards: then jerked abruptly, held up by the hansom in front. A bother, these frequent blocks! The lovers did not seem to mind. There was a charmingly pretty girl, with a piquant irregular face and a wide mouth, who said to the infatuated man sitting beside her, and the words reached Denys's ear: 'I do love this slow procession down Oxford Street: don't you?'

The man said something in an ardent whisper, at which the girl laughed. Denys smiled but fidgeted. He might as well get out and walk, only that he was hemmed in by the traffic.

Another jerk and the hansom moved on slowly. The eastward-going line passed by them. Suddenly Denys drew himself back into the corner of his hansom, the colour rushing to his face and then ebbing away, leaving it cold and disdainful. The occupants of a hansom passing him slowly were Hilary Arundel and Margery Barton.

Neither had seen him. The girl was looking down with her strange rapt gaze of happiness. Arundel's face was turned towards her, boldly love-making. It was as though he tried to look under the lowered white lids into the girl's eyes.

The block broke up and Denys's hansom, getting free, jingled cheerfully the few yards between him and Stratfield Place. He was possessed by such a queer, murderous rage as no one could have suspected in the slight, elegant young man, who alighted and bade the driver wait for him. He said very bitter things in his mind of Hilary Arundel. So that was how he amused himself while Dawn Finucane waited for his coming! And Mr Aarons's accident? Was that a lie, an impudent invention? He said to himself that Hilary Arundel was playing fast and loose with three women, not with Mrs Aarons in the common, obvious way: but, remembering her expression of tenderness as her gaze fell on Arundel, Denys said to himself that Arundel must have deceived her noble nature. The letter, in which he had seemed to reveal some answering nobility in himself, was a cheat.

He had expected disorder at the house, but beyond that there was a group of persons at the door asking the same question which he had come to ask, there was no sign. He had time to notice that the group was oddly assorted. A crossing-sweeper stood by a lady in deep black, who might have been a duchess, and when these had turned away there came a consumptive-looking girl, who might be a dressmaker's apprentice or some such thing.

'There goes my summer 'oliday!' she said, as she turned away, having been answered by the servant that Mr Aarons was very ill indeed. She had a small, impertinent nose, and red hair crowned her peaked face. Denys looked after her as she went. He had an absurd inclination to say that she would not lose her summer holiday, but he repressed it. It was not a moment in which he could speak to Mrs Aarons about it.

The servant, who had worn an air of weary tolerance for the poor people, and an almost obsequious respect for the *grande dame*, brightened a little as he recognised Denys.

'Mrs Aarons would like to see you, sir, I am sure,' he said. 'She is bearin' up wonderful. Mr Aarons is no better. In fact, there's no' ope, sir, I'm sorry to say.'

Denys had not expected to see Mrs Aarons—but the man evidently expected that she would see him. He could not refuse, nor did he wish to, putting away from his mind the thought of Dawn and her father waiting for him at the Ambassadors'. He said to himself that Mrs Aarons had been deceived in Hilary Arundel. He was all aflame with fierce indignation for her as well

as for Dawn and that poor, passionate child, Margery Barton.

‘If you think she would like to see me, Davis if it would not be too much for her, I should like to see her.’

‘Mrs Aarons is as brave as brave,’ said Davis, closing the door against another batch of inquirers who were just arriving.

He put Denys to wait in the music-room. A piece of music lay on the floor by the piano, as though some one had flung it down hastily. That small sign of disorder, where all was orderly, struck coldly to his heart.

He stood, hat in hand, watching the door. The dusk was in the room, but there was still a reflected gleam from the western sky, that fell on the gilt organ-pipes and caught a Venetian mirror above the mantel-piece. He stood by the door, from which steps led into the garden, listening. The house was strangely silent. The muffled and distant sound of London which he had noticed before came as though from a great distance off.

The door opened and Rachel Aarons came in. She approached him very quietly.

‘This is very kind,’ she said, and took his hands in one of hers, laying the other softly over them.

‘The doctors hardly know how long it will last,’ she said, and her voice shook and broke. ‘I cannot pray for it to be long. He is terribly injured. He was a good man. Many people will be the poorer for his absence.’

‘How did it happen?’ Denys asked, in a whisper.

‘As you might expect. A frightened woman ran

under the bonnet of a motor, and when she tried to get on to a street refuge slipped and fell back again. My husband was waiting on the refuge. He sprang to catch her and the motor caught him before they could pull up. The poor woman was saved.'

'A good way to die,' said Denys.

Her eyes shone on him with a sudden radiance, as though they had caught some of the gold of the western sky.

'He would have been satisfied,' she said. 'When people talk of "mean as a Jew," and "a Jew's bargain," remember, Mr Fitzmaurice, that you knew one Jew who was a good man and unselfish, so that even money-lending became generous in his hands.

'I shall remember.'

'Now I must go back to him,' she said in a low voice. 'We have never been separated since our marriage. These are my last hours. He would like to know that you were sorry. He had a high opinion of you.'

So, with a sad finality she set Simon Aarons among those who had been and were not.

'Can I do anything for you?' Denys asked eagerly. He had come more and more to feel the gracious charm of Rachel Aarons—and he stammered in his eagerness as he offered her service.

'Nothing,' she said. 'I am very grateful. Captain Arundel has been here with me. I have just sent him out with little Margery Barton, who was staying here when . . . it happened. I wanted to send her away home, but she begged to stay with me. It is not right to burden young people with one's own sadness. I told him to take her somewhere, to give her a breath of air. They were most unwilling to leave me.'

'Yes,' said Denys lamely; and recalled the two he had seen in the hansom, entirely absorbed in each other, forgetful of the grief and desolation they had just left.

'It is good of you to come,' she said again, going with him towards the door. 'I had no idea that you were coming back so soon.'

'It is only for a few days. I had business,' he said.

'I shall always remember that my husband liked you so much,' she said, leaving him at the foot of the great staircase.

CHAPTER XV

LOVER'S WAY

THE morning they left London Denys read in the *Times* that Simon Aarons was dead. He had not been expected to live through the night, when he had called to make inquiries.

Reading his *Times*, while the London houses grew thinner and thinner and finally gave way to green fields and quietly-grazing cattle, Denys was nevertheless aware of Dawn in her corner pretending to read one of the magazines he had bought for her, her little face very cold and set. They had stayed two days longer in London, and Hilary Arundel had made no sign. Leenane was very ill at ease and kept sending queer, tender, half-resentful looks at his girl. They had dawdled through those two days, after all their business was finished. Denys knew, with a quiet rage, that they were waiting for Dawn to see Hilary Arundel. Leenane, who had never been untender to his girl since she was born, had devised reasons for staying.

Denys glanced up from his paper to intercept one of those looks. Something of relief was mingled with its other element.

'Mr Aarons is dead,' he said, without turning his head towards Dawn's corner seat.

'I am very sorry,' Leenane answered. 'He ought to have lived for ever. Sorry for the poor woman too,

although I'm hanged if I know how she came to marry him. They said she could have had her pick and choice when her lovely voice set London raving.'

'I can understand the marriage,' Denys said.

'Oh, you can, can you?' returned Leenane, 'you're the only person I ever heard say it. Lots of people put down the decent things he used to do to her influence.'

'She was his almoner,' Denys said. 'He made her that.'

He was aware, without looking, that Dawn had come out of her abstraction and was listening, as he conjectured, with an almost painful interest. She sank back in her seat presently and resumed her listless gazing over the flying landscape. If she had expected to hear Hilary Arundel's name it was not spoken.

But it was not in Dawn's bright spirit to carry her heart on her sleeve, or not for long. After a while she was talking and laughing, looking forward to going home, imagining the welcome the dogs would give her, how pleased the people would be to see her, what progress the gardens would have made, how much the tiny, fluffy balls of chicks and ducklings would have grown since she had left them.

Leenane brightened up wonderfully with Dawn's cheerfulness. He looked across at Denys to see if he had noticed it, and Denys nodded reassuringly, such a slight nod that it might pass unobserved. The two men were very shy of their secret understanding over the girl both loved.

'When Dawn is away for a week she thinks it has been months,' said Leenane. 'She expects so much growth. Once, when we came home in May from six

weeks in Rome, she had to take a lantern to see how the things were growing. It was night when we arrived. She only left the stables and the poultry-yard alone because she thought the disturbance of their slumbers by the flashing of her light might keep the beasts awake.'

Both men laughed, while Dawn said that the fowl, at least, would have fallen from their perches at the untimely introduction of light.

Denys wondered jealously if Dawn had begun to look forward to finding some message from Arundel on her arrival at Castle Clogher. It might be that her native spirit and courage were reasserting themselves? He hoped it was that. Presently Leenane slept in the comfortable way men have of passing a railway-journey, and Dawn asked a question or two about Mrs Aarons. The questions led Denys on to talk, and he described Mrs Aarons and the household at Stratfield Place and Homewood with quiet enthusiasm.

'It is terrible that a tie so perfect should be broken by death,' he said.

Dawn's eyes were shadowy and full of lambent light.

'Ah,' she said, with strange wisdom, 'but how good it was that he went before her.'

'Why, you are right,' said Denys. 'He would have been lost without her.'

At Bletchley a number of Americans got in. They had been visiting Penn and were on their way to other pilgrimages. Leenane woke up and made room for the ladies. There was a large party of them, and they looked like school-marms, as indeed they proved to be. When Leenane had piled away all their baggage the elder of the party looked at him with shrewd bright

eyes, which relieved the plainness of the colourless face and remarked :—

‘You are very obliging, sir. An American might do as much as that for his own women-folk. We don’t expect it from strangers.’

They were on their way to Lichfield to make a Johnson pilgrimage. Apparently they spent all their tour in making pilgrimages, and were greedy for more. Six pairs of bright, narrow eyes were fixed on Denys while he made itineraries. Leenane listened with admiration and Dawn with obvious interest.

‘We think, sir, that you are very obliging and very well informed,’ said the spokeswoman of the party, when Denys had planned them enough pilgrimages to last out their time. ‘You see, sir, we’ve saved for many years for this trip to Europe, and we can’t afford to lose one thing we ought to see.’

At Lichfield they went off profuse in thanksgiving. They had all handbags, which they carried themselves without any intervention of porters. Their late fellow passengers watched them as they trooped out of the station, austere and efficient in their gray garments and absence of any kind of ornament.

‘They’re inquisitive,’ said Leenane. ‘They want to know all the time. Only America could turn out such a party as that.’

Then he asked Dawn if she was not amazed at Denys’s learning, and Dawn replied that she was, laughing at Denys with a fresh rosy beauty like Aurora’s—the shadows of the morning fled away.

It was a beautiful bright day. The country through which they were passing was still in the glory of the young greenery. It was hot, although both windows

were open, and Leenane turned again to his slumbers as easily as a dog.

Denys, sitting opposite to Dawn, had a vision so dazzling that his head reeled. He imagined what it would be if he and Dawn were flying somewhere on their wedding journey. For a second or two he yielded to the delicious dream; then came shamefaced out of it to find Dawn's clear eyes regarding him. He blushed suddenly and painfully, as if she could have known.

'What were you thinking about, Denys?' she asked. Of late she had taken to calling him Denys like her father. 'You looked as though you were falling asleep. A penny for your thoughts!'

'They were worth much more than that,' he said, and tried to say it lightly.

'But you were blushing, Denys,' she persisted, and then she was suddenly shy while Lord Leenane opened his eyes and asked who was blushing, adding, before relapsing into sleep, that he thought blushing had gone out with the Victorian age.

After that awkward moment Denys did not trust his thoughts. He kept asking himself what that sudden shyness of Dawn's portended, while he kept his eyes fixed on the *Times*, which he had picked up from the floor where Leenane had dropped it. He tried to fix his attention as well as his eyes, but in vain. Dawn had gone back to her book. It was *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, by Thomas Hardy. He had commented on her choice of a book earlier, saying that not many girls of Dawn's age would have selected it from among the follies and worse of the book-stall. She was absorbed in the story. That was good, he said to himself, and was aware of

the round white wrist as he was aware of the line of cheek, the little ear, the sweep of delicate, dark eyebrow, and the convolutions of the clustering curls about her neck that had bronze in the shadowed gold.

Leenane left them on the boat and went below. It was raining at Holyhead, after the radiant day, and there were cat's-paws on the water.

'We'll see Erin in tears, as we usually do,' said Leenane. 'I'm going to make myself decently scarce,' and he disappeared through the door of the companion.

'Do you feel like facing it?' Denys asked. The brine was already in his eyes and on his lips. 'It will be a rough passage.'

'I shall love it,' she returned. 'The last time I made the Channel passage the seas washed over me while I sat wrapped up in a sailor's oilskin with a sou'-wester on my head.'

'I'll see if I can fit you out,' said Denys, and went off to find an obliging sailor who, for a consideration, would supply the desired articles.

By the time he had secured them the boat had left the harbour and was out in a greenish sea which heaved slowly with the most uncomfortable suggestion for the bad sailor. He wrapped Dawn in a big oil-skin, having found a sheltered place for the two deck-chairs: he had another for himself, with a third to wrap about their knees. She had exchanged her pretty hat for a sou'-wester, bidding him give over the hat to the charge of the stewardess, who came and looked at them doubtfully from the doorway of the ladies' cabin.

There must have been something that suggested a

tip about Denys, for the woman was almost obsequiously friendly.

'I'll have my hands full here presently, sir,' she said, 'I don't know if your lady is a good sailor, but I'll keep a sofa for her. You've only to call me and I'll come.'

'Your lady.' Delicious tremors ran through Denys's blood. He glanced half-fearfully at Dawn, eclipsed in the sou'-wester and oil-skins. Had she heard? No, apparently she had not heard, for her gaze was towards the slimy, slowly-moving mass of green water, that was now above their heads, again under their feet, as the boat rolled.

'She is a good sailor,' he answered hurriedly.

'A sweet, pretty creature,' the stewardess said, lowering her voice. 'A good thing she's a good sailor. I wonder that ladies who are not should ever begin married life on the sea.'

A loquacious, good-natured woman. Denys was pink to the ears and the woman looked at him approvingly, as she returned into the ladies' cabin with the gauzy hat.

'I never saw one more in love,' she said to herself, and then sighed for her own widowhood.

Denys went back shyly to Dawn, who turned her full, luminous eyes on him in a smiling welcome. Apparently she had heard nothing. He thought her little face sweeter than ever in the incongruous shade of the sou'-wester. As he sat down beside her he could see just the soft lips, very young and a little sad, the upper lip still a little full, as though she had not left enchanting childhood behind for enchanting girlhood.

He would have covered her knees with the oil-skin,

but she would not have it. It must serve them both; so Denys sat by his divinity, so close that he could feel the warmth of the contact, in a state of felicity.

Presently the swell was heavier, and the deck was quickly deserted, except for one or two hardy persons, who stood, hands in pockets, feet wide apart, balancing themselves at an angle of ninety degrees.

Now and again their chairs skidded, and they laughed. The spray drenched them and a big wave slapped over the side and just fell short of them. Except for a passing sailor, in a tremendous hurry, they were alone. The monotonous thump-thump of the screw went on somewhere near at hand. Dawn laughed with exhilaration as the wave splashed on the deck, ran almost to their feet and retreated to the scuppers. Her eyes shone out of the sou'-wester and her curls were moist little rings of gold curling more wildly for the damp.

'Just think of papa!' she said, 'and all those poor things downstairs. Oh!'—as another wave broke—'I should like it to go right over us. It wouldn't really wet us in these things, Denys, would it?'

He answered, trying to keep the leaping joy out of his voice, that he thought they were quite safe in the oilskins.

'When I was a child,' Dawn went on in a reminiscent voice, 'I used to make plays for myself. I was rather lonely, you know, Denys, after Maurice went away to school, and I was still quite little. I used to hide inside my bed curtains and think the jungle was outside. There was an accommodating little maid who did the lions and tigers so well that my imagination ran riot

and I had a screaming fit of terror one night. After that she refused to play any longer. It was in the hour when my old Nanna was at her supper in the servants' hall. I did not betray Rose, but I had frightened her, and I frightened myself. I remember looking out fearfully at her just before the impersonation became too much for me, and saying: "Don't be a lion: be Rose." But she was roaring so ferociously that she did not hear me.'

'Poor little thing,' said Denys tenderly. He wanted the very nasty passage to go on for ever. Fearfully he looked forward to Howth looming up and the Poolbeg Light. He glanced at his watch in a furtive terror, and then sighed his relief. They had two hours more before leaving the open sea.

She chattered to him, and her wet cheeks were brilliant: the drops of spray hung on her curls and her eyelashes. She had taken off her gloves and he insisted on her keeping her hands under the oilskin. For a moment she laid her hand upon his to show how wet it was.

He said to himself that she could not, after all, care so much for Arundel, since she was so ready to forget and be happy. Presently the sky lightened a bit and the wind was quieter, and the stewardess came out of the ladies' cabin with a shawl about her ears.

'You don't think your lady would like to come in now, sir?' she said. 'We shall have worse weather before we are done with it.'

'I am enjoying it immensely,' said Dawn, who was always charming with simpler people. 'It is so very kind of you to think of me. But I am really much better'

here than I should be in the ladies' cabin. Thank you so much for looking after my hat.'

'Not at all, ma'am,' said the woman, standing smiling at her. 'As long as you're not afraid of neuralgia : I'm racked with it.'

'Oh, poor thing !' said Dawn. 'Imagine neuralgia ! and having to live on a boat ! Please go right in out of this wind. I am so sorry.'

The stewardess went off, and Dawn turned amused eyes on Denys.

'Did you hear her call me "ma'am," Denys?' she asked. 'It is a delightful way our people have of calling a girl "ma'am," and an old woman "miss." Father says it is because the girls wish to be "ma'ams" and the older ladies wish to be "misses," and the people are so polite that they address them according to their wishes.'

Denys was relieved that Dawn had not understood the implication underlying the stewardess's words : but presently she turned towards him and laughed a delightful gay young laugh.

'Do you know, Denys,' she said, 'I believe the stewardess thought we were a honeymooning couple?'

'Oh, I think not, I hope not,' murmured Denys lamely.

'It sounds very rude,' said Dawn, and laughed again. 'Do you think I look like a bride, Denys? Or you like a groom? We should have to have new portmanteaux and new boots, and all sorts of uncomfortable things.'

He was glad there was nothing of consciousness in her voice. He had trembled when he imagined her reading the presumption of his thoughts.

At Kingstown, when Dawn had gone into the ladies' cabin to set her lovely dishevelment right, he waited for her, and the stewardess came out to tell him she would not be long. He felt a queer gratitude towards the woman who thought Dawn his precious possession. He gave her a regal tip and moved away when she would have wished him happiness, because he had caught a glimpse of Lord Leenane coming out of the companion, glancing here and there in search of Dawn and Denys.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DOWAGER ARRIVES

DURING the days that followed the home-coming—Denys had pushed on home, leaving Leenane and Dawn to stay a night at the Shelbourne and come on next day—there was plenty for him to do. He found his father inclined to grumble gently at his absorption in the affairs of the Leenanes.

‘There’s a deal to do at home, lad,’ he said. ‘The hay’s ready for cuttin’ and not much labour to do it. It’s a great summer. If the water doesn’t run low it should be a good year for the cattle. I wonder what at all we’d do for the water if the bogs were to be run dry, as you talk of doin’?’

‘There’d always be plenty of water in Ireland,’ said Denys, and laughed.

‘I often wondered,’ went on the old man, ‘whether the Lord put the bogs there if He meant them to be drained dry. You might be goin’ too fast, lad, doin’ more than ever you were meant to do.’

Denys only laughed and bent his back to the work. The labourers who had touched their caubeens to Mr Denys newly home from College and received on equal terms by the Leenanes, looked at him with an added respect when he showed that he meant to see the work done and help to do it. It was good to see his young graceful figure bend to the sweep of the scythe: he

had not forgotten the art, and he had kept himself fit during the school and 'Varsity years. After a few days there appeared the newest American mower and reaper, which gleaned the little fields with a stately swinging stroke. Denys had been to Dublin to buy it and had learnt to drive it, and he gave the peasants their first lessons in the use of the labour-saving appliance. It was true that there was little labour to be had. The young people had flocked away to America for so many Springs and the little farms required all the energies of their owners. The men stood and stared with admiration when Denys sprang into the little iron seat and drove the machine. It was to be let out for hire, he told them, and there would be no longer the hard, painful saving of the harvest which took so many days that the rain was bound to come and ruin it before it could be finished.

One of those days Denys, in his shirt-sleeves and coatless, brought the machine back to where a little group stood by the gap in the hedge. He had the tan and the sweat of the labouring man; it was the hottest June the country-side remembered, and in a few days he had grown a fine mahogany colour below the line of white under his broad-brimmed hat. His arms, brown and strong, would have delighted a painter or a sculptor. He said to himself that he dripped sweat; the little drops were on his brow and his upper lip; he had a fastidious dislike to appearing in such a heated condition before Dawn Finucane.

He brought the machine gallantly to the end of the long palish-green swathe and sprang out of the seat, handing the tackle to a tall boy, with fine classical features and large dreamy eyes, who was standing by.

‘See if you can drive her straight now, Mick,’ he said. ‘Wait : I’ll turn the horses for you.’

He had lifted his hat towards the waiting group. Dawn was there and Lord Leenane, with an old lady whom he had not seen before, who was talking to his father.

‘All right, Denys ! We’ve come to see your new contraption,’ Leenane called out in his great jolly voice. It was wonderful how he had recovered his jollity of late.

Denys, with an apology, sprang back to the machine and turned the horses easily. Then came to the earth again and went towards the group, uneasily conscious of his disarray under Dawn Finucane’s eyes.

‘How nice you look, Denys,’ she said. ‘You’ve got splendidly brown. What a jolly thing a hayfield is !’

‘Not fit to shake hands,’ said Denys, looking at the ungloved hand she held out to him.

A curious sense had come to him of something inimical, unfriendly, in the large old lady who was looking at him with calm blue eyes from under the shadow of the lace veil which was turned back over her ample, old-fashioned bonnet. She was extremely good-looking. Her hair was iron-gray and beautifully waved; her complexion, still brilliantly pink and white, had cracked a little in the pink, and there were a few furrows about her mouth and at the corner of her eyes. Her nose was aquiline and she had a rapid, dominant look which now measured Denys with a certain appraisement.

He did not need to be told who she was. She was, of course, the Dowager Lady Leenane, a very redoubtable person. She had been living in Italy and travelling

about for some years past, but the country had a good many legends of her, mostly of the grimly humorous sort.

'Here is my mother, Denys, come home to set us all straight,' said Leenane. 'Mr Fitzmaurice of Murrough, mother!'

'Ah! it is a long time since there were Fitzmaurices of Murrough,' said the Dowager, and inspected Denys through her lorgnette. 'I met a Fitzmaurice at Bordighera one year—Lizzie Fitzmaurice.'

'The younger branch of the family,' said Denys, and grew very red.

'She said she was a Fitzmaurice of Murrough,' the Dowager replied freezingly. 'She used to dance very well indeed till she was not of an age to dance: it was unseemly. Hunting now, or swimming; I believe I could do both if I tried still. She gave up dancing suddenly. Not an hour nor a day too soon. She was brought to her senses by a dapper fellow asking her hand for a waltz and claiming her acquaintance. "Who may you be?" she asked. He had been, at their last meeting, a child of three, and she a buxom young woman of five-and-twenty. All of a sudden, she said afterwards, "the ballroom was full of ghosts. Dick, who died in South Africa; Jack, who broke his neck at the big jump at Punchestown; Archie, who asked her to wait for him when he went to India and never came back: all the partners she had danced with in her good days: she was forty-five if she was a day. She refused the little chap his waltz. "Go and ask a girl," she said, and went straight home from the ballroom. "A pity it didn't happen sooner," said I, when she told me. "An old fool's the worst fool of any."'

This recital was addressed to Leenane in a high, unsympathetic voice, which somehow rasped Denys's nerves. He was still standing before the Dowager as though he waited to catch her eye.

'That was hard on the poor lady,' grumbled Leenane disapprovingly.

Dawn was caressing the dog at her feet. Rory still, though with a white muzzle and chronic rheumatism. Suddenly the old lady flashed round upon Denys, who was standing with a curious new awkwardness, quite unlike his usual ease.

'You'd better put on your coat, young man, and don't be standing there looking indecent and getting a cold as well,' she snapped out.

Denys flushed, and made a dive for his coat, which was lying on the ground near by.

'Never mind my mother, Denys,' said Leenane, 'she prides herself on speaking her mind.'

'Hoity-toity! why should the young man object?' the terrible Dowager asked. 'I remember his father—a very respectable man, with a pretty wife a bit above the work of a small farm. This boy is like her.'

Dawn had walked away. How grateful Denys felt that Dawn had walked away! She was quite out of hearing. He felt that the Dowager was putting him in his place; he had been forgetting for so long that he had a place.

The labourers were loitering to hear. Mick Gannon, having cut a long, irregular swathe, had drawn the horses up with a jerk close by the group.

'We drove over to see you and your father, Denys,' Leenane said unhappily. 'I'm afraid we're interrupting the work.'

'My father is in the house,' returned Denys, taking off the coat which he had put on. 'He is struggling with his accounts. I ought to do them for him. I am always so busy with other things.'

He said good-bye without offering his hand, and returned to the seat of the machine, while Leenane and the Dowager strolled towards the low farmhouse.

Their way led them round the field which Denys was cutting, along the other side of a thick hedgerow. It was the field he had snatched from the bog, a rich field, of which he was very proud. Mick Gannon and the others were turning the hay as it fell with their long rakes: it was very heavy this year and full of sap.

The Dowager's voice came stridently to him as the machine clattered on its way to the distant hedge.

'Quite time I came back, Leenane,' she said. 'I don't see my granddaughter associating with a young farmer on apparently equal terms.'

'He has as good blood as we have,' said Leenane sulkily.

The answer was lost upon Denys, who had turned about the horses and gone back.

He let tea-time go by, though he was thirsty for his tea. It was not until he had heard the Leenane carriage drive away that he gave up his seat to Mick Gannon and went towards the house. His father came to meet him, holding a long blue envelope in his hand.

'I meant to have brought you this before, lad,' he said. 'It came an hour or two ago. That old woman put it out of my head. Why didn't you come in to your tea? She said she wanted her tea, so I told Maggie to make it, and the old lady seemed to enjoy it.'

She has a wonderful memory and a great appetite. I wonder what age she is at all?’

‘She looks very fresh,’ said Denys mechanically. He made no effort to open the envelope which was in his hand.

‘She does then—she’s as pink as an old rose, though ’tis the thorny rose she’d be. I couldn’t help tellin’ her she had excelled them all for beauty. She liked the compliment well.’

‘Most women would—from you,’ said Denys, eyeing his father with a certain tenderness. Pat Fitzmaurice could never refrain from an innocent, roguish compliment to a woman.

‘I remember her a lovely young woman,’ went on his father. ‘Though there was always the bitterness under her tongue. Leenane’s father loved her till the day he died, for all her sharp ways. You’d be surprised at her—she was an O’Grady of Clare—that could never keep herself from rappin’ out a damn if she wanted to. Perhaps she never tried to keep herself. There was an Archdeacon O’Rourke over at Lisnastragh—he’s dead and gone out of it years ago—took it on himself to speak to her about her love of the cards: she was a great player, and she’d keep putting up the stakes: many a night she stood up after losing more than the Leenanes could afford. The Archdeacon was a sour-faced, little man. She called him a damned whipper-snapper.’

‘I suppose I might as well open this,’ said Denys, smiling unhumorously over this reminiscence of the Dowager.

‘Aye, do, lad. It looks like a big bill, or a Government letter.’

Denys opened the long blue envelope with little curiosity. He was too much obsessed by the Dowager's insolence towards him. He had not troubled to look at the flap else he would have seen that it bore the inscription, 'Wilson, Collyn and Wilson, Lincoln's Inn Fields.' Not that the name would have conveyed more to him than the fact that it was in all probability a legal document of some kind.

He took out the folded letter from the envelope and read it through, without betraying any excitement. For the moment he was so bitter at being put in his place that he had little capacity for any other kind of feeling. He had been humiliated under the eyes of Dawn Finucane and his blood was hot within him.

It was a surprising document all the same. His father's blue eyes—blue and unstained as a child's—looking at him in anticipation, smote him sharply as little things about his father had a way of doing. Why should these people, the Leenanes, have caught him into their lives and interests, leaving his father so much alone.

'Mr Aarons has left me ten thousand pounds absolutely,' he said. 'He has also expressed a wish that I might borrow from the estate another ten thousand pounds for my reclamation scheme, at two per cent.'

'Ten thousand pounds,' repeated Pat Fitzmaurice, with an air of stupefaction. 'Did you say *ten thousand pounds*? And it might be ten thousand straws for all you seem to care.'

Denys came out of his dream.

'I'm very glad, father,' he said. 'It is a great stroke

of luck. I'd like to think it would make life easier for you, now that we have all this money. I ought to have been lifting your burden all these years.'

'Indeed, I'd rather have you as you are, lad,' said Pat Fitzmaurice, looking at his son with naïve pride. 'It wouldn't suit you at all to be gettin' up in the mornin' and goin' to fairs. You'd look queer and out of place standin' in the fair of a wet mornin', waitin' for the man that would buy your cattle.'

'It is what I should have been doing instead of you,' said Denys, with sudden, sharp remorse. He remembered to have heard, through his dreams in the dusk of morning, Patsy Kearns calling his father over and over to get up and go to Drum Fair. 'Are you awake, sir? Are you awake, sir?' and the sleepy answer, till at last his father's footsteps went heavily down the creaking stairs. 'Why should I work for others and leave your work to yourself who ought to have a rest?'

'Now don't be talkin' that way,' said Pat Fitzmaurice anxiously. 'You wouldn't be thinkin' of doin' anything foolish. Throwin' up the agency or anything like that? As for rest, I'll never be an old man in the chimney-corner. When I lay the work aside, I hope it's settin' out to find your mother I'll be, and not to be a useless old carcass of a man.'

Father and son for the moment seemed to have forgotten the amazing fact that Denys had just received a legacy of ten thousand pounds. Now Pat Fitzmaurice reverted to it.

'What will you do at all with the big lump of money?' he asked.

'I know one thing I shall do,' Denys replied, and his eyes were full of dreams. 'I shall buy up the fields

about Murrough and the old ruin itself. I'd like to have it back in our hands.'

'A pity you couldn't live in it,' said Pat Fitzmaurice. 'There's some of the rooms would hold. If there was glass in the windys and a floor to the rooms and a bit of roof over it, it wouldn't be too bad.'

'For the present I'm afraid the Fitzmaurice ghosts must have it,' said Denys. 'If some of my dreams should come true—well, who knows?—there might be room for us and the ghosts.'

CHAPTER XVII

'SUMMER—BUT WHERE'S THE ROSE?'

FOR some days Denys devoted himself to saving his father's hay, as though he had never been Lord Leenane's agent at all. Then came the diversion of the sudden, unexpected appearance of Mark Lefroy, his tutor at Cambridge, upon the scene.

Denys had something like hero worship for Mark Lefroy. A tall, thin, youngish man, with a tired, satirical face, contradicted by the gentleness of his gray eyes. Lefroy was a great sportsman, as well as a fine classical scholar and a writer of limited but distinguished reputation. He had picked out Denys for notice in his first year, and Denys had hardly yet got over the ingenuous thrill which had come to him with the first indication of Mark Lefroy's favour. Mr Lefroy had been known to undergraduates at Cambridge as the Marker—a sure indication that he was a man and a brother.

Now he came in with his purblind, smiling air, and sat down, blinking from the sunlight outside, in the greenish twilight of the little parlour at Murrough Farm. He wore a shabby, easy-fitting suit of tweeds, obviously cut by a good tailor, and there was a curious distinction in his air, despite his shabbiness.

'This is delicious after your dusty roads, Denys,' he said. 'I had no idea there was dust in the West of Ireland. I thought it always rained.'

'It has been the finest early Summer any man remembers,' said Denys, with simple pride, as though he had had a hand in the fine weather. 'But the dust comes here as soon as we get a fine day. You see, the water runs away through the peat and what isn't peat is limestone. You've had a long tramp, Lefroy.'

'I've covered twenty miles since breakfast,' said the Marker, looking down at his dusty shoes, his hands clasped over the blackthorn he carried. 'I had milk and griddle bread at twelve o'clock at a cabin on the last mountain I crossed. The woman apologised for the size of her little househeen—I think that is what she called it—giving me a stool to sit on outside while I enjoyed her hospitality. "It rared eleven childher," she said with pride, "'twas a tight fit, your honour, like washin' potatoes in a pint pot, but I lost none o' them. They're all scattered on me in America except one or two that's wakely.'"

'Where did you come from last?' asked Denys.

'I was staying with Aughrim.' He mentioned the magnate of local magnates. 'The fishing wasn't as good as I expected. How could it be with the sun blazing away like a furnace? Lady Aughrim was the fly in the ointment. She professed to be sympathetic and interested in all one's interests. I'd rather have a shrew. She drove me out. Poor Aughrim! No wonder he is old before his time! I say, Denys—this is deliciously peaceful. Could you put up with me for a week? I need as much rest as that, after Lady Aughrim, before I take the roads again.'

'Put up with you!' repeated Denys. 'Make it a month, if you can put up with our simple ways. I

can't promise you much more than the warmest of welcomes.'

His face beamed light upon Lefroy. For the moment he had forgotten even the humiliation inflicted upon him by the Dowager Leenane.

The distinguished visitor fell easily into the ways of the Murrough Farm. He was not above cooking a meal for himself when he wanted to go off at cock-crow on some expedition or other. He was on the easiest terms with Maggie and the farm labourers. The discovery that his letters were addressed to the Hon. Mark Lefroy made the people more appreciative of his friendliness. 'Sure, he was a real humble gentleman!' said Maggie, and she was not alone in her judgment.

Denys had been divided between distaste of exposing himself further to Lady Leenane's process of putting him in his place and the dread of appearing sulky. Why had the terrible old lady come home to spoil the pleasant and peaceful atmosphere of Castle Clogher, where he was as one of the family? Dawn had been very kind. He had told his jealous heart that she was too kind. Nevertheless, the kindness was an exquisite thing in comparison with the constraint, the unhappiness of her manner when they met in the presence of the Dowager.

Mark Lefroy's visit settled the matter for Denys. Castle Clogher was quite well aware of the manner of man Mark Lefroy was. Even the Dowager, who had plenty of brains, condescended to be civil to him. Having wondered audibly at finding a man of his quality at the Murrough Farm and talked about his great-aunt, Dorinda Frazer, who had been at school

with her at Bath, she discovered a certain interest in Denys, as the friend of Mark Lefroy. Her interest took the form of exhibiting Denys as an example of the throw-backs to be found among the Irish people. She recalled a picture she had seen somewhere of Sir James Fitzmaurice of the Desmonds, and discovered a certain resemblance in Denys's dark fineness. In a loud, insensitive voice she told the story of how Leenane had bidden the boy he found sitting idly on a sunny bank go drain the bog, with no expectation of such a thing being possible. She added picturesque details from her place at the end of the dinner-table as to Denys's appearance on that occasion. She was terribly plain-spoken, and she even referred to the supposititious absence of a portion of Denys's clothing, with a strident laugh.

'You wouldn't believe it of him now,' she ended up, 'when he looks like anybody else.'

The red pulsed in Denys's cheek like a fire. He was aware that Dawn looked down at her plate, with a troubled, unhappy air. Leenane grumbled under his breath. Oddly enough, it was Mrs Metcalfe who rushed into the gap in her placid way.

'One who looks like Sir James Fitzmaurice of the Desmonds cannot possibly be described as looking like any one, mamma,' she said. 'I am glad you found that likeness in Denys. We have often noticed it.'

In the drawing-room the parish priest waited to play bridge with the Dowager. He and Leenane, Mark Lefroy and the Dowager, made up a table. Dawn had disappeared. Mrs Metcalfe called Denys to her side and made him sit down by her. She was knitting, as usual, the quickly-flying needles making little points

of light with the jewels of the old-fashioned rings that showed on her little plump white hands, under the hanging sleeves of old Limerick lace. She was a most composing person. In the shadow cast by the lamp-shade she laid a soft hand on Denys's arm.

'You are not to mind my mother,' she said in a whisper, 'she is very old.'

The Dowager was telling, with great verve, at the top of her voice, the story of a compliment paid to her by a chance acquaintance in a railway carriage. He happened to be a sporting man, and her memory went back to Punchestown and Galway Races in the mists of antiquity. 'I beg your pardon, miss,' he said at last, 'you must be as old as the Devil.'

It was not a silent bridge-party. Now and again the Dowager rapped an irascible question at her partner? Where had he learnt his bridge? Did he usually trump his partner? Had he ever heard of following his partner's lead? and so on. The priest, who was her partner, took these questions with the greatest good-humour, acknowledging in a way to disarm resentment, that he was a duffer at the game, and hoped her ladyship would teach him better.

Mrs Metcalfe's voice at Denys's ear was as soothing as the running of a little cool stream under ferns and grasses in a parched land.

Denys lost and caught up again the thread of what she was saying. It was a tale of the Dowager.

'Mamma liked Mr Dick O'Malley very much, but she used to say to him: "I don't mind meeting your sporting characters, but I draw the line at your actresses."' Mrs O'Malley had been an actress, but no one could have objected to her: she was a dear,

kind, innocent creature, and mamma was very fond of her. She used to say: "Belinda, my dear, I love you, but I don't love some of your friends." So, as she was so terribly plain-spoken, the O'Malleys took care not to ask her to meet any of their actress friends: she quite enjoyed meeting actors, as she always has loved clever people. But one day, when they were entertaining a variety star, as they call it, a Miss Betty Grey, mamma was announced. Dick O'Malley was always very quick. The newspapers had just reported that Queen Victoria had been presented with a very large Bible at some Scottish railway station, where the royal train halted, by a lady named Elizabeth Grey. The newspapers used to be very full of Queen Victoria at that time, having nothing else to talk about. The O'Malleys had been laughing over the coincidence of names not long before.

"My dear Lady Leenane," said he—mamma knew every one else at the table—"allow me to introduce Miss Elizabeth Grey. You remember the pleasing incident of her gracious Majesty receiving a Bible from Miss Elizabeth Grey? It was in all the papers." "I'll take your word for it," said poor mamma. "It was a graceful thing to do if she didn't mean to insinuate that her Majesty was in the want of a copy. I'm very glad to meet you, my dear. I've got a Bible at home, thank you."

"She was delighted with Miss Elizabeth Grey, who had an adorable innocence of aspect, which I believe was the cause of her furious success at the halls; it made such a piquant contrast to her songs. She came home and told Mary—my dear sister who died long ago—what a charming person she had met and how

gauche and unready her daughters were by contrast. I don't think that mamma was very much affected by the Bible giving. She rather apologised for it—so very Scotch, you know. Mamma is not narrow-minded, as you will discover presently.'

She paused to pick up a dropped stitch, and the Dowager was heard inveighing in unmistakable language against a novel which was having a great vogue at the moment.

'I like my books clean or wholesomely dirty,' she said; and Leenane remarked that his mother liked *Tom Jones*, as very few women did. 'I'm not squeamish,' said the Dowager, 'but these women who do and say such foul things turn me sea-sick.'

Denys looked apprehensively about the room; but there was no sign of Dawn. Mrs Metcalfe went on as though the narrative had not broken off.

'Of course, Mr O'Malley told mamma afterwards; he could not keep the joke to himself. Mamma remarked in her superb way: "Ah! you knew better than to present her as an actress. I never believed in the Bible-giving," and carried off all the honours of war.'

Dawn appeared no more, and at ten o'clock Denys stood up to go. He was to accompany his father to a fair in the morning, since the old man would not hear of his taking his place. It was a glorious night. Leenane offered to walk part of the way home with Denys. The priest and Mark Lefroy had gone on ahead. The last words that floated back to them showed that Lefroy was expounding his view of what he called the Myth of the Creation to a patient listener.

'Father Shannon won't get in a word beyond "See that now!" or "Sure, I never thought of that!"

and he won't want to,' said Denys. 'Mark will have a glorious time: he loves a good listener: and Father Shannon will give him credit for good understanding and good will.'

Leenane apparently was not a good listener at the moment. He broke in with a somewhat moody voice.

'My mother wants to take Dawn off to the Tyrol. I'm not sure I shan't let her go, though we shall miss her, eh, Denys?'

That 'we' was balm to Denys's aggrieved heart. Leenane, at all events, did not share his mother's views about putting Denys in his place.

'Don't mind my mother,' said Leenane hastily. 'She doesn't mean it. She's been treading on people's corns since the day she was born. My poor father died at thirty,' he added half-humorously. 'You've been keeping away. Don't let an old lady's *brusquerie* come between us.'

As though anything could but your own will,' Denys said warmly. 'I owe you everything.'

'You've more than repaid it. You've set me on my feet. I haven't told my mother about the Raeburns. I'd never hear the end of it. But the money's there, lad. It will turn over and over in these schemes of ours. You shall have your share.'

'I ask for nothing,' said Denys, 'only to serve you as best I can.'

'It was a good day for me, Denys,' said Leenane deliberately, 'when I found you dreaming on the sunny side of the ditch. You've been like a son to me.' His voice broke slightly, as it always did when his loss came into his mind.

Suddenly he stopped and laid a hand on Denys's

arm. They stood still in the moonlit road and the smell of sweetbrier and honeysuckle came to them through the smell of the seaweed in the cove below the high, winding road.

'I'll let Dawn go, though we shall miss her,' he said. 'My poor little girl! She's hankering after that fellow. He doesn't write. I can feel her disappointment in my bones and marrow when no letter comes. One has come to-night. I sent it up to her. I wish I could wring his neck.'

Denys said nothing. What was there to say? After a second or two they turned and tramped along in silence. Denys remembered as he went downhill, after Leenane had left him, that he had quite forgotten to mention his legacy and the loan which was placed at his disposal for the purpose of reclaiming the bogs.

CHAPTER XVIII

DENYS HEARS THE NEWS

DAWN was gone, and the sun had dropped out of the sky for Denys, who felt while he went about his duties between Clogher and the Murrough Farm as though the glorious summer had become autumnal. Mrs Metcalfe had gone with Dawn. There was no period fixed for their return. The Dowager talked of spending the winter in Rome. Leenane's face was wintry as he told the news to Denys.

'They'll make a year of it, you'll see,' he said. 'A year without Dawn! I don't know if I can stick it. I'll be going out and joining them, I expect. My mother can be kind when she likes. She will be good to Dawn: and there is always Sophie.'

Denys missed Mrs Metcalfe too, the soft, comfortable optimistic woman, sitting so placidly with her eternal knitting in her lap. Castle Clogher seemed a lonely place for one man, and, as the weeks went, Leenane seemed to miss his little girl more and more. The gray showed in his hair as it had not before, and a dust seemed to have fallen on his wholesome, weather-beaten face and his blue eyes.

'She had a letter from that fellow, Arundel—damn him!' he said to Denys. 'I told you it had come. It was to bid her good-bye. Some hugger-mugger about

the conflict between duty and inclination. The poor child believed him. I had it from Sophie. The change will be the best thing in the world for her. We don't mind being lonely, Denys, lad, do we? so long as it is good for Dawn. Just look at the dogs. They miss her as we do.'

The circle of imploring eyes looked up at this reference to them, and the dogs wagged their tails.

'I never knew such a child for dogs,' Leenane went on. 'She never knew what fear was. I remember when she was a small child and we were in France. I was on my beam-ends, and we put up at a place kept by an Englishman, a shocking bad hat. They had a big poodle chained under the steps, poor beast! He was supposed to be savage. He ought to have been. The fellow should have been shot who kept him there. Dawn was no more than two years old. She had an uncommonly soft little heart and she burst into tears the first time she saw the dog. One day she was missing, she and a goose that was for dinner. There was time for us all to be terrified—such a place, slimy rocks and sheer cliff—before we found her. She was in the kennel with the dog. He was still licking his chops and she was sitting in the dirty straw stroking his cheeks. "Don't cry any more, poor doggie," she said, "you've had a most d'licious duck for your dinner." The bad hat was for flogging the dog. I stopped that and called in the law: there was a sympathetic *gendarme* who detested the bad hat. He was warned, and we got a little branch of the Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals, which had been started in the place by some islanders, to watch him. The poor beast was found dead in his cold kennel under the steps soon afterwards.

I'd have shot him myself if he hadn't died. I wasn't going to leave him there.'

It was a great summer. The West had never known such a summer. Pat Fitzmaurice looked from the little hill over Murrough Farm to the bogs shimmering on the great heat and wondered.

'The world's changin',' he said. 'I remember the wet years. There was one that broke at the end of May, and the rain never stopped till the end of the following year. The crops were all lost on us, and the cattle died of the murrain. There was talk of famine—but God was good to us: we had two or three years followin' that were dry and fine. If it goes on like this the bogs will be dryin' out of themselves.'

That summer Denys began the work of reclamation. He had resisted the inclination to spend all his legacy on Murrough. He had bought out the old Tower and the waste land surrounding it for a song. The old castle had three rooms, one above the other; by the side of it a building of two stories of much later date, half-ruined and thickly covered with ivy. Windows and glass and roof were broken, but those who had built it had built strongly, and the walls were intact. It might easily be made into a dwelling-house of a moderate comfortableness. Denys roofed it and let it be till he had time to attend to it further.

Neither Leenane nor his father thought it strange that he should spend good money on an old ruin, given over to the jackdaws and sparrows; and Denys felt himself a better man now that he was possessor of Murrough, that he could legitimately call himself Denys Fitzmaurice of Murrough. He imagined what would be in the future. A few gnarled fruit-trees stood about

the old ruin, and there were green traces of what had been once garden pathways. The garden was going to come back, the house to be added to and made habitable in the good days that were coming.

He had beaten up labourers near and far for the reclamation of the bog. It was not so simple a matter as the Little Bog; there had to be machinery for pumping out the water which cost an extravagant sum, and the progress was inch by inch. Denys put his back into it, working with the men, often while the water rose half-way to his knees. And the old men came and looked on at the work curiously, saying that Denys was going to rob the poor of their little fires and that it was no use going against Nature: the rain would come and the bogs would fill in again. Sure, God meant that there should be bogs.

The rain came and the work was suspended, and Leenane began to long, like the swallows, for the south. Good reports came from the travellers. They were moving southward quietly, expecting to be in Rome in October. Dawn had written that she was keen about Rome, but wanted more than anything else to see her father and to hear all about home, and the dogs, and Denys's reclamation of the bogs. She asked to be remembered to Denys.

Leenane read the letter aloud with satisfaction.

'She's her own woman again,' he said gleefully. 'I'll go out and bring her back, Denys, as soon as ever the spring's in sight. Let her have her fling! You can't do Rome in a day, nor a month, nor a year. By Jove, I'll see it again through her eyes. There's nothing like seeing the world through your children's eyes.'

A day or two later he was dissatisfied with a new

photograph of Dawn sent home by Mrs Metcalfe. She was too big-eyed. Perhaps it was only a trick of the photographer. Did Denys think she looked thin? They were not taking enough care of her.

The photograph sent him off at last happily on his road to Dawn. He remarked casually that his mother might be a terror in other ways, but she was perfect as a traveller. She knew the map of Europe by heart, the best people in all the capitals and the right places to stay: and she never grumbled at discomforts, small or great.

'Dawn will get the best out of it with the Dowager,' he said. 'Why, when I've travelled with her and that grenadier but priceless jewel of a maid, Sarah, I've been a little boy. They looked after me, by Jove, every step of the way.'

He was gone, and Denys went with him as far as London. He had had a letter from Mrs Aarons. She would like to see him about the loan her husband had been willing to give for the purpose of reclaiming the land: she wanted to know how Denys's work had been going on.

In the Strand Denys ran up against Mark Lefroy.

'The very man I wanted to see most,' he said, flushing with pleasure. 'I was going to wire to you to ask if you could come to town: if you could not, I should have gone to you.'

'Denys, you are immortally young,' Lefroy said. Denys was looking at him with the eyes of a lover. 'Of course, I'd have come any distance to see you. Can you lunch? We'll go to the Savoy.'

Yes, Denys could lunch. He had made an appointment with Mrs Aarons for the afternoon. He did not

intend to stay in London longer than he could help. He had to look up some machinery : to see one or two men interested in the work he was trying to do, experts. He must be back in four days' time, else his father would be alone for Christmas, a happening he did not contemplate.

They had a delicate lunch at a little table in the great dining-room of the Savoy—hors d'œuvres, a bit of fish, a dainty dish of chicken with mushrooms and olives, an omelette to follow, and a scrap of cheese.

'Now I come to think of it,' said Denys, 'I believe I've been eating boiled bacon every day for the last six months.'

They talked of many things. Lefroy was nebulous about his plans for Christmas, had not made up his mind which of his invitations to accept—he had an embarrassment of choice—finally, since Denys would not leave his father alone for Christmas, decided to chuck the country-houses and cross to Ireland with Denys. There was plenty of rough shooting on Denys's newly-acquired estate, which comprised a mountain and a stretch of lake. Lefroy thought that, of all things, he should like to own a mountain. 'It would be putting them in their places for a while at least, from our point of view,' he said. 'They always look so confoundedly like owning us and not being aware of the miserable possession.'

Denys was enchanted. They made all their arrangements for meeting a few days later. There would be four weeks of good talk and comradeship—in the slack time of the winter too. Lefroy asked for all his simple friends by their names : Peter Walshe, Christy Nally, Mick Gannon, old Mrs Egan, Kate O'Brien.

He had sat by many a cabin-fire and thoroughly enjoyed himself.

Suddenly he asked what lucky chance had brought Denys to London just in time to meet him as he walked down the Strand, undecided as to his Christmas plans.

Denys told him that he had come to see Mrs Aarons.

'Ah, yes,' he said. 'A queer story that. Simon must have anticipated it when he made that curious will.'

'I did not hear of the will,' said Denys. He had not heard, beyond the part which concerned himself. He had thrown himself into hard work these many months back. 'We are all provincials in the West of Ireland,' he went on, 'we are self-contained. We don't trouble about what is happening in the capitals of Europe beyond Dublin, nor much about that. We have our own towns.'

'It is a queer story. Simon Aarons, while treating his wife very handsomely during her lifetime, and giving her a free hand as to the charities they were both interested in, left her not very much to dispose of. Everything goes to the charities after her death unless—this is the odd thing—she re-marries. In that case she is at liberty to make what provision she will for her husband. Queer fish, Aarons! He adored her. Most men in his circumstances would have tied her up from marrying.'

'She would never marry,' said Denys, with confidence.

'There are rumours that she is going to marry again, and very foolishly. The wisest woman cannot be trusted not to commit a folly when she is in love. The

same remark applies, with even greater force, to the male sex.'

Denys turned very red, and Lefroy wondered what he was blushing about. He had often been amused at Denys's ingenuousness which made him blush easily.

'She is going to marry—whom?' he asked.

'I don't see why you should be so excited about it. You'd no pretensions yourself? Perhaps it is not true. They say she is going to marry some chap in the Coldstream who has run through what money he possessed.'

'Captain Arundel?'

'Yes, I think that is the name. Might be her son, they say. Queer things people do!'

Lefroy left immediately after lunch. It was as well, for the interest had suddenly gone out of Denys's talk. An acute observer, he wondered how Mrs Aarons's re-marriage could possibly have affected Denys. He knew that Denys was in love with Dawn Finucane. It was a bit of a bewilderment to him; but it would have been against all his canons to pry into the secrets of even his dearest friends, so, with a mental shrug of his shoulders, he dismissed Denys's odd behaviour from his mind. If the boy had chosen to tell him, well and good. Otherwise, it did not concern him.

Denys went off to see one of his experts, and discussed hydraulics and river drainage for a round hour; after which he thought he might appear at Stratfield Place.

Although he had talked to the expert with eager enthusiasm, and listened to him intently, the thing he had heard from Mark Lefroy had lain at the back of his mind all the time. He had an intense desire to know if it was true, and a burning indignation against Hilary

Arundel, supposing it was true. He remembered the evening he had seen Arundel and Margery Barton driving together down Oxford Street, absorbed in each other, flushed and laughing, while Simon Aarons lay dying and his widow to be was alone with her grief. He swore softly between his teeth when he remembered it, at Hilary Arundel, not at the poor impassioned girl. What did they see in him—Margery Barton and Dawn?—in the cold, neat face with the blue eyes and golden hair and moustache. Cold: yes, the face was cold, but there had been passion in it that evening. Then he remembered the letters Mrs Aarons had shown him which had revealed Hilary Arundel in a new light. He remembered also the sister, so unlike him, and her devoted affection for him. Perhaps the tale was not true after all.

Another man might have remembered that if the tale was true a dangerous rival was out of his path. Not Denys. If it were true, he could only feel a burning indignation and scorn for the man who had had three women's hearts given to him and had been false to all, falsest to the woman, essentially noble, whom he was going to marry for her money.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WAY OF A WOMAN

THE familiar scent of flowers which he associated with his first visit to Stratfield Place came to his nostrils as he entered the hall. There were sheafs of mimosa in blue jars on the onyx tables. In the drawing-room, as he was ushered in, the more delicate northern scent of violets and lily-of-the-valley reached him gently. He remembered. There had been growing flowers everywhere. He could not imagine Mrs Aarons without flowers and music.

She came round the corner of a big screen of Chinese lacquer to receive him. The other side of it was a glowing fire and a couple of luxurious chairs facing each other. It was a cold wet winter day, and already the murky afternoon had become dusk. The Blindman's Holiday, in the sweet-scented, fire-lit room, was very agreeable.

She took his hand between both of hers with her exquisite kindness. She was in black, a soft, dull, silken blackness, that became her noble figure and stately head. His first impression was that she looked pale. There was something mournful about her. Of course, it was the delusive light and shadow and the black gown. Her eyes looked cavernous in the pallor of her face. He thought of a priestess. His next thought was that she did not look like a woman about to marry

a young man with whom she was infatuated. Her old air of grave composure was there. He said to himself that Rumour had wronged her.

'It is very good of you to come,' she said. 'You should have come to lunch.' Then she added in a lower voice, '*He* would have been very glad to see you. He had taken the most extraordinary liking to you.'

'He was very good to me,' said Denys simply: and the last shadow of belief in what he called those infamous stories fled away.

She rang the bell for tea, and they settled down for a comfortable talk in the fire-lit warmth. Denys had not yet rendered an account of his stewardship, as he called it. He told her of his purchase of Murrough.

'I do not know if he would have approved,' he said doubtfully. 'He might have thought it unpractical.'

'Not one of our nation,' she answered, 'although we are scattered over the face of the earth. He would understand. Don't you remember: "By the waters of Babylon they sat down and wept because they remembered Zion."' '

'With the money I had over after the purchase of Murrough, its lake, bogs, and mountains—I had three thousand pounds left when once more a Fitzmaurice owned Murrough—I have bought a long strip of land on the shores of Erris Bay.'

'Why?' she asked, with quick, intelligent interest.

'Because the Fleet could ride at anchor in the bay; because it is the nearest land to America; because it is going to be the port for America in the future. It cannot be long delayed. I can see and I am half sorry to see it, a new Belfast, only greater and cleaner than Belfast, there where there are now only the gulls and

the bitterns. We must see that it is better than Belfast. No factories, as I have seen them : no half-naked men and women in the steaming atmosphere : no sweated labour : no slums.'

'Ah,' she said, with satisfaction. 'Simon said he recognised in you the practical visionary. He thought little of the man who had not vision, however practical he might be. Is there more land to be had?'

'Miles of it—for a song.'

'I shall appoint you my man of business. I have power to make investments.' Something of a shadow passed across her face, he thought, but could not be sure because of the delusive light. 'You can have ten thousand pounds more, if you will, to invest for me. I believe in the future of your country.'

'The money will be well invested, I am certain,' Denys said eagerly.

'Mr Collyn—of Wilson, Collyn and Wilson—my husband's solicitors—would say I was mad : I believe in your practical visions; I believe also in my own luck. Even the Bank has come to believe in that. I have made investments against everybody's advice, and they have been successful. All I touch turns to gold.'

The weary shadow he had thought he imagined fell over her face as she said it, and Denys, becoming accustomed to the half-light, said to himself that she looked ill. Something had been making ravages in her noble beauty. Her cheeks were hollow, her eyes large in her face. It did not occur to him that she had chosen the half-light so that he should not see, out of some strange pity for herself: but it was so.

'What have you been doing to yourself?' he asked,

with sudden sharp tenderness. 'You are not looking well.'

'Ah, you see,' she said. 'Every one does not see. I am a sick woman, Denys.'

He was startled at the mournfulness of her tone.

'You have not heard anything,' she said. 'People will gossip.'

'I have heard nothing,' he answered, not thinking of the gossip about Hilary Arundel, but only of her health.

'You do not know that Captain Arundel and I were married a week ago.'

He uttered an exclamation of surprise.

'Listen to me,' she said, and laid a hand on his arm. 'Do not think hard and cruel things of me till you have heard all. I have always loved Hilary Arundel—ever since my husband brought him to me to decide if he was to help him or not—like a son of my own. He is devoted to me, really and truly. I believe his devotion is the best thing in him, or one of the best. Do you think a sickly, middle-aged woman like me would tie a golden boy to her sick-room? You know the terms of my husband's will? I might have saved enough to leave Hilary a comfortable sum out of my income. On the other hand, I might not have time. Simon wished me to live with dignity. To marry him was the only way. It is just—a formal tie. When I am gone he can marry the girl who is his fitting mate.'

It sounded almost incredible to Denys's ears.

'He agreed?' he asked, dumbfounded. He was remembering the girl like a rose who had sat pressed close to Hilary Arundel's side in the hansom, that golden evening of last May. Poor Dawn! Apparently Dawn had never been in it at all.

'He took some persuasion. I have great influence over him, more than any one else in the world, I believe.'

She said it with an air of mournful pride.

'You should be loved for yourself,' said Denys impulsively. 'It ought not to be part of a bargain.'

She flushed like a girl, and he saw she was gratified, but she said quietly that she was satisfied with her husband's love, by which he took it that she meant the love of Simon Aarons.

'I knew this thing was coming, even in my husband's lifetime,' she said, and laid a hand on her breast, with a tragic gesture. 'I kept it from Simon. He could not have endured it. If there had been any other way I would not have tied Hilary, even nominally, to a sick woman. It is hard on the boy. But there was no other way.'

'He will make it easier for you,' said Denys; 'he will comfort you like a son.'

'He is very good to me,' she answered. 'I insist upon the marriage making as little difference as possible in his way of living. I want people to understand just how it was, that if there had been any other way I should have taken it. He is at Windsor with his regiment. When he comes to town he is very kind and comes to see me. I insisted that it should be so. The whole world will know that I did not forget Simon Aarons, that I, a suffering and sorrowful woman, did not do such an ignoble thing as to marry a young husband.'

'Yes,' said Denys, in a slow, considering way. He was wondering what the world would think of Hilary Arundel's share in the transaction, but he said nothing, lest it should pain her.

'You need never doubt his goodness to me,' she said, as though she suspected some doubt. 'He wanted to be with me, to help me to bear the suffering that must come to me. He even wanted to resign his commission and take me away somewhere, though he loves his profession and the regiment. Poor boy—as though taking me away would make any difference! When I come to die'—she lifted her head proudly—'I shall die alone. I have made him promise solemnly. I hope it will not be very long. I could not bear to be perhaps—dreadful—to him.'

A queer thought came to Denys. Was it so that a mother loved a son? He put the thought away as though he had no right to dwell upon it.

A footman came in, fetched a tea-table and set it by Mrs Aarons's—no, Mrs Arundel's—chair. He brought a cloth and the tea-tray; then the tea-pot, and a pyramid of small silver dishes, doing it all with a slow, soft-footed efficiency. Lastly the silver kettle, under which he lit a spirit lamp. They talked of ordinary things while he was in the room.

'You must make a good tea, Denys,' she said, when the servant had gone, uncovering one after another of the little dishes. 'Here are all the things that Hilary likes best—buttered toast, pâté-de-fois-gras sandwiches, chicken, and water-cress sandwiches, Sally Lunn, several different kinds of cake. A boy should make a good tea. Sugar and cream?'

She smiled at him across the tea-tray. The footman came in with a lamp, which he placed a little behind her. Denys had a passing wonder as to whether he had been instructed to place it there.

'Captain Arundel has rung up to say he is coming

round to tea, ma'am,' the man said, as he set down the lamp.

'Oh, thank you, James. Bring fresh tea as soon as Captain Arundel arrives, and ask cook to send up some hot cakes with it.'

'Yes, ma'am.'

The man left the room. Her face came round suddenly into the light of the lamp. It was flushed and smiling. The impression of pain and weariness passed away from Denys's mind. It must have been the flickering lights and shadows. What did she mean by talking of death and disease?

'I am glad you will see Hilary,' she said. 'I don't think you and he liked each other much, Denys. You must put that to one side. Only remember how good and dear he is to me. I should like to have friends to stand by Hilary when I am gone.'

He knew what she meant. A good many people might look askance at Hilary Arundel for the bargain he had made, when he was free to take Simon Aarons's money and marry a young girl. He replied a little stiffly that he was too unimportant to count as Captain Arundel's friend. He would have plenty of friends of his own world to stand by him if he needed advocacy. Then he had a sudden revelation. All she had told him was meant so that he should know the whole story of the marriage, and be able to influence public opinion if necessary. He began to wonder whether she had not taken many people into her confidence as she had taken him.

A little later Hilary Arundel came in, his face pinched and blue. His eyes watered with the cold.

'It is bitter weather outside,' he said. He and Denys

had nodded coldly to each other. 'It is delicious in here. No one keeps such fires as you, Rachel.'

She beamed at his commendation. It seemed to Denys almost a profanation that Arundel should call her Rachel. He could not get used to the idea of these two being husband and wife in law. He stood up to go. She pressed him to stay. Hilary Arundel said nothing, but sat down and began to do justice to the good tea.

She looked wistfully from one young face to the other.

'How are the Leenanes?' Arundel asked presently, thawing under the combined influence of the fire and the good tea. 'Still in Rome, hey?'

Denys answered coldly that they were still in Rome.

'And Dawn—Miss Finucane. Dawn is quite well, I hope?'

He said it with an air of bravado. And Denys answered that so far as he knew Miss Finucane was quite well.

After all, there was nothing to complain of in Hilary Arundel's manner to his wife. There was something different from his usual foppish self-satisfaction when he addressed her—nothing of the coldness and the mockery he had for other people. There was reverence in his air towards her.

'After all,' said Denys to himself, as he walked down Oxford Street in the teeth of the east wind, having left the strange pair to each other's society, 'she is a woman in a million.'

CHAPTER XX

THE ANCIENT ENEMY

DENYS returned home with full powers to buy up as much of the land as he could buy on the shores of Erris Bay for Mrs Arundel. He had an idea that she meant to leave it to Hilary Arundel. If she died and things panned out according to Denys's vision, he, or those who came after him, would be fabulously rich one day.

The man who owned that slice of desolate country was a rich man. That was good: so sure was Denys of his vision that he could not have borne to take advantage of a poor man. Lord Tyrawley and Erris was sick of his tenants in Erris village and along the shores of the Bay. He complained that they were getting insolent with the times. Already a bailiff of his had been threatened.

'I hardly knew that there were any cottages,' said Denys: 'they are indistinguishable from the boulders.'

'They are there all the same,' said Lord Tyrawley—'a lazy, thriftless lot, always making a poor mouth when they're asked for their rent. You should get them out—if we agree. One of them winged my grandfather in the old days—about '80. Neither my father nor I have had personal communication with them since then. We deal with them through our

agent, Mr Beresford Bright of Seaford Park. If they don't pay they go.'

A speech of Lord Leenane's recurred to Denys's mind.

'The Irish landlords were ruined by their own agents and their own bailiffs.'

'I don't know what the world is coming to,' went on Lord Tyrawley. 'I've some land in the Midlands, fat land. I don't get enough rent for it. They say they made the richness of the land themselves. Their wives and daughters dress like ladies: the days of neat and fitting attire are gone by for them. I should revive the old laws again of fine dressing for women of their class.'

'Ah,' said Denys, quoting Lord Leenane, who liked to poke fun at his unprogressive brethren, 'they put your rents in their garments.'

'Exactly,' said Lord Tyrawley, not suspecting a joke. 'It is enough to make my grandfather turn in his grave. He had power of life and death over the tenants on the estate. Of course, you would not understand the point of view, Mr Fitzmaurice. You are, I suppose, in the position of a tenant. Wonderful what the farmers can do now. They send their sons to college. If they are able to do that they should not grumble at an increased rent. I remember your father, a very estimable man—you were at school, I think—I lost my way one foggy day after the Blazers, and your father took me in, fed me and gave me a bed. It was very kind of him.'

'The Fitzmaurices were always hospitable,' said Denys dryly; 'so the teeth of their children are set on edge.'

'Ah, you know your Bible! very glad of that. Well, I shall have the deeds drawn up, Mr Fitzmaurice. Of course, you are properly accredited in acting for Mrs Arundel?'

'You may be quite satisfied of that.'

'Ah, to be sure. I heard you were acting as Leenane's agent. A queer idea. Not that Leenane has much work for an agent.'

'If he had I should be unable to do it,' said Denys, 'having a good deal of work of my own.'

The light-eyed, light-haired, rather vacuous-looking young man stared at him.

'Ah—um—of course. I heard Leenane was trying to drain the bogs. Ridiculous! If it was possible it would have been done long since. I hope Mrs Arundel will import some Jews into Erris to teach the people thrift. Good-bye, Mr Fitzmaurice, good-bye; you shall hear from my solicitors in a few days.'

He did not go through the formula of offering Denys his hand. What matter! Denys remembered that Lord Tyrawley was only fourth of his line, that his ennobled ancestor had been lampooned by Curran as—

'A rascally attorney well
Housed, for his office is in Hell,
Who cheats the poor and eats the dirt
And toadies to the titled sort,
Would give his soul for rank and pelf,
And even cheat the D——l himself.'

The ancestor had wriggled his way into Parliament and bought his Peerage by voting for the Union. Denys being Irish, it took the sting out of Lord Tyrawley's

rudeness to remember these things, and he savoured them as a sweet mouthful.

The negotiations were not altogether concluded when Denys received, to his exceeding surprise, a visit from Hilary Arundel. The smallish, elegant figure leaped from the side of a station car to meet Denys coming the other way. It was a chilly gray day of March, when the wild geese had gone northward, crying high in the sky, and there was a commotion in every group of trees: when the starlings chattered like falling water and the low hedgerows seemed to quiver with the motion and the talk of small birds.

He held out a hand to Denys, and Denys took it, after a momentary hesitation. Hilary Arundel noticed the hesitation and flushed.

'I came over to see what you were doing,' he stammered lamely. 'It's a queer, wild country this. What skies! Do you often get that indigo-blue in sky and water?'

Denys glanced at the sky reflected in the bog-pools. He had not noticed that it was indigo-blue, and he would not have discovered that epithet for it. Had Hilary Arundel come from London to talk about the Irish skies?

'I have a friend, a painter, who raves about the skies here,' Denys said. 'He called that blue Reckett's blue. He used to rave about that and the pink of the river-sands at evening.'

He felt what he was saying to be futile. What had Hilary Arundel come for? He glanced at the neat, small profile and saw that it was pinched with cold. They walked along side by side, taking the same direction the car was going.

'Lord Tyrawley asked to see some one direct from Mrs Arundel,' Arundel said. 'He thought that you had not a proper grasp of business.'

He laughed as he said it, and the chilliness of his face changed to something pleasanter.

'You've been treading on his lordship's corns,' he said, 'you know he is called Lord Tomnoddy and Worse at the clubs.'

'He trod on mine,' said Denys, 'but he was too light a weight to hurt.'

'You came to see me before you saw Lord Tomnoddy and Worse,' he went on.

'Without the remotest intention of taking the matter out of your hands,' said Arundel. 'I have a letter from Mrs Aarons to the effect that she wishes you to handle the business. Of course, the lawyers will come in for the title-deeds and all that. You are her accredited agent.'

'She could have written it,' said Denys, uncompromisingly. 'I don't see where you come in.'

'Nor I,' returned Arundel, and laughed. He looked very cold. His lips were blue and his eyes watered. His teeth chattered; he kept them quiet with an effort.

'How far have you come to-day?' Denys asked.

'From Sligo. I've driven on the side of that thing for twenty-five miles. I'm bumped to bits with your infernal roads and frozen to the marrow with your cold, piercing damp. Are you taking me to a fire?'

'Send the car away,' said Denys, on an impulse he could not have explained. He detested Hilary Arundel, but there are circumstances in which a man must treat his enemy as though he loved him. 'Let him leave your

bag at the Murrough Farm. You can have a bed and the best our house affords: it is not much compared with . . .’

Arundel winced.

‘Don’t say “the luxury I am accustomed to,”’ said he, in a tone which was almost imploring.

Arundel had played fast and loose with Dawn—he had dared to do it: he had played fast and loose with Margery Barton: he had made a marriage which should have put him beyond the pale, yet—strangely enough, Denys did not detest him as much as he had thought he did.

‘I won’t say it,’ he replied, with the beginning of a smile, ‘but it is a poor little place. I have just acquired the home of my ancestors, Murrough, but at present that would be even less comfortable.

For the life of him he could not have refrained from bringing in Murrough, even at the risk of exciting Hilary Arundel’s mockery.

‘You really mean it?’ Hilary Arundel said eagerly, ‘I *may* send the car away when he has dropped my bag? I confess I do not see myself driving back those twenty-five miles. We’ve had one drenching. The driver had provided me with a sort of gridiron to sit upon so that I shouldn’t sit in the wet. I’m not sure that it fulfilled its purpose.’

‘Better stay and see Lord Tyrawley at your leisure. It is ten miles to Cloona-Erris. You won’t want to see him to-day?’

‘If I can get under a roof I shan’t want to turn out for some time.’

They sent the car on with the bag and walked along the road to the Murrough Farm. This

was not the scene of the big reclamation, but, as they walked, Denys pointed out to his companion the bit of the Little Bog which had been reclaimed, on which his cows were quietly grazing.

'It is the best bit of land we have and the freest from moss,' he went on. 'If we can reclaim on a big scale it will mean immense wealth, now going to waste in the bogs.'

'You are not afraid of the unseen powers?' said Hilary Arundel, with an unsuspected imaginativeness. 'What are those things sticking up there like gnarled old fingers? The spectral trees of the bog overwhelmed many centuries ago. They might be held up in warning.'

'They might be striving to throw off the bog that stifled them,' Denys said, answering in the same vein. 'That is soft bog. There was a poor man here, Denis Mannion by name. He had a little boy and girl he loved, and, as their mother was dead, he had to leave them at home—in that rotting and roofless cabin over there—while he went to his work. He used to tell the girl to look after the boy—she was a bit older, but only seven years old. For a time it worked well. She was a careful, wise little body. Then one evening as he came from work he saw a little hand sticking out above the bog, just as those old trees are doing. He got a long ladder—lucky it was handy—for he'd been thatching—and he crawled out on it and somehow he got the little one out of the bog; but she was dead. The little boy's body was never recovered.'

'What a tragic story!' said Hilary Arundel, and shivered.

'Yes—isn't it? It gives one a sense of the cruelty

of the bogs, even if they keep the fires of the people alight. I had a friend staying with me here, Mark Lefroy. He loved the ways of the people, and was always talking with them and finding out things. He asked Margaret Walshe one day how long her turf-fire would keep alight. "It was lit," said she, "the day my man brought me home a bride, and it has never gone out since." They call the turf the seed of fire. There'll be enough of it for the fires when we have turned all these wet places into rich land. This bog won't drown many more children.'

'There'll be a deal of beauty lost,' said Arundel, gazing out over the rich purples and russets and greens of the bog.

They sat down by the fire in the little sitting-room at the Murrough Farm while Maggie prepared a meal. Hilary Arundel looked very tired and rather fragile as he lay back in the easy-chair, a whisky and soda at his elbow, gazing about him at the pleasant room.

'That is——?' he asked, indicating the portrait of a young girl, oval-faced, with velvety eyes and the softly opening lips of a child or a flower.

'My mother. She had French blood. That is why her eyes are so dark.'

'And those?'

He pointed to the portraits of an elderly man, very hale and hearty, in a bottle-green coat, a red waistcoat, and fine lace ruffles to his shirt, and a lady, a few years younger, wearing a huge cap and a lace shawl, draped about her black silk shoulders.

'My grandfather and grandmother—on my father's side.'

'I call it an uncommonly pleasant room,' said Arundel,

letting Rory's ears drop through his fingers, as Denys had been doing that day long ago.

'A bachelor room,' said Denys, with a sense of gratification. 'Maggie lets us do what we will: and you've always got to turn a dog out of a chair before you can sit down.'

Patrick Fitzmaurice came in—they had heard him kicking off his mired boots in the passage. He had been choosing cattle for the fair, and he had had a long tramp through the boggy and rushy fields. He received Hilary Arundel with old-fashioned good manners, and soon after he had sat down in a chair before the fire, fell fast asleep.

'He is wearied out,' said Denys. 'He simply won't delegate things to me. He is convinced of my incompetence.'

Maggie brought in the food—a boiled chicken and bacon; a cauliflower, and splendid potatoes. There were flowers on the table, and they ate from good plates; old willow pattern, with lines of gold in the blue and the knobs and handles of the dishes richly gilt. The silver was heavy and good; the cloth old damask, and the table napkins prettily folded. Maggie had been between-maid at Castle Clogher, before she became Denys's nurse, and, as she would have said herself, she knew what Quality liked.

Despite Arundel's fatigue Denys and he sat up late into the night. They talked while the turf fell to white ash, finding much to say to each other. Denys felt a sense of amazement at this sudden burying of the hatchet. What was he about to forgive so easily—not only his own score, for he remembered Arundel's cool, bright insolence—but the far more serious things

he had against him? As they talked, he felt that there had to be a readjustment of his opinions. Puppyish, foppish, thin-blooded, insolent: the adjectives he had thought fitting for Hilary Arundel, were not fitting, after all.

‘Sporus, thou thing of silk,
Sporus, thou mere white curd of asses’ milk,’

seemed suddenly unconsidered, inappropriate.

‘Upon my word, Fitzmaurice, you’re a lucky man!’ said Arundel, contemplating his own small feet, in purple leather slippers, thrust out to the warmth of the fire. There was a pucker in his brow and his eyes looked moody and discontented.

‘Yes?’ asked Denys, with a lift of his eyebrows.

‘You think me no end of a poor creature. I am. But perhaps not altogether as poor as you think me. I have a queer desire for your esteem.’

‘Oh! why should you have?’ asked Denys awkwardly.

‘You might perhaps let Dawn—Miss Finucane—know sometime what I am going to say to you.’

So that was it. He wanted Denys to rehabilitate him in Dawn’s eyes. Denys’s mood hardened. He listened for what should come.

‘You think I married Rachel for what she can give me. I did not. I married her because—mainly—I wanted to give her whatever happiness is possible in her suffering life. She is an angel—far above other women, no matter how sweet and good they may be. She wakes something in me no other woman has wakened. It is hell to me that she must suffer. You see—I am not so despicable as you thought.’

'No,' said Denys, not denying that he had thought him despicable.

'She only thinks of me—of us, never of herself. She leaves me free as air. She wants to give me all she can: she was always one to give. I am as dear as a son to her. She wants me to have what her son should have had if she had had a son. I would not have married her for that. I would have chanced it with an undowered girl. I even thought of a future—British East Africa is full of chances, golden chances. Do I look as if I could rough it? I don't. Well, I can. So could Margery—with me.' The name seemed to have slipped out by accident.

'Will you tell Dawn Finucane what I have said,' he went on wearily. He stood up and stretched and yawned before the sinking fire. 'She wasn't for me—Dawn, I mean. I'd never have satisfied her. Margery's another matter: she knows the worst of me and the best. You are a lucky fellow, Denys Fitzmaurice.'

He went off to bed, stumbling with fatigue. They did not touch any more during his visit on the subject of his marriage.

CHAPTER XXI

TROUBLE BREWING

SNOW set in that year in the third week of January and lasted almost till May Day. It was enough to cure all aspirations after a good old-fashioned winter. There was a deal of suffering. Sheep and lambs perished in the successive blizzards, and the question of fodder became acute. They were accustomed in those parts to mild winters, when there was grass for the beasts all the winter through. The little stocks of hay were soon depleted. There was nothing to do but to get the cattle and sheep under shelter and feed them with what they could. The ivy was the only green food to be had, and the creatures lived on the ivy if they did not thrive on it: fortunately it was very plentiful.

It was a lean and an anxious time. The snow had drifted so that in many places it was several feet in depth. Denys went out one day with his alpenstock to see to the animals on the land round about Murrough. He had sheltered them in the lower floor of the house, and had done all he could to make them comfortable. They were not likely to starve for want of ivy for Murrough was covered with it in abundance.

It was the lambing-season, and he had all the anxieties of the shepherd. Fortunately the snow had frozen pretty hard by this time, so that there was less risk to the flocks and the shepherds. Night after night

Denys was out with the sheep. In the struggle against starvation for so many creatures he forgot to be love-sick for Dawn Finucane. She was there, like a clear star, shining in the hidden country of his mind, but he no longer fretted and was hungry for her face.

There was a truce between Man and the animals that came about the house to be fed. The rabbits crept over the frozen ground like little ghosts at night. The small birds came to be fed, and the gulls from the open sea and the rooks, by *force majeure*, carried off the food with hoarse screaming cries of satisfaction. There had to be food left for the little ones where the bigger ones should not find it. The robins came into the house and pecked at the loaf and butter while men sat at table. When Denys was obliged to shoot a fox that stood gazing in at the window one morning, he felt as though he had betrayed a thing that trusted him.

There was a good deal of misery too, in the ragged villages, where there were no great stocks of turf, since the rain had come down the previous fine season at an unpropitious moment in such 'teems and polthoges' that most of the turf had to be left to lie out in the bog all winter. Denys, as Lord Leenane's agent, worked with the priest and the doctor and some other representative men to keep the people alive. He was helped by a substantial cheque from Mrs Arundel; but the difficulty was to get supplies even when one had the money to pay for them.

It was Dr Morris who first reported the queer sayings of the people to Denys.

'You're a public benefactor—that's what you are,

Mr Fitzmaurice,' said the doctor, who had a richly-rolling brogue and dark eyes that might be said to be richly-rolling too. He had Spanish eyes, yellow in the whites of them, a heavy thatch of dark hair and a brilliant colour. 'The divil a bit o' thanks you'll get for it. The old women—ay, and the old men, are putting it about that it's the first of seven hard winters—they've got hold of some old prophecy—and that it's taking the people's fires from them you are, with the bad times coming.'

'I'll give them fires,' said Denys, with his visionary look, 'and something to put in the pot as well. Look what happens to them every year when the Flesk overflows its banks and is out for miles, and all the cattle and sheep drowned and the land made brackish. I'll tie up Flesk within his banks, and the people will be blessing my name.'

'Maybe, maybe,' said the doctor easily. 'They're saying, moreover, that by buying up all that land along the coast you've destroyed the little farms. The people won't be able to get the seaweed or the sea-sand and the fishermen won't be able to take the harvest of the sea.'

'We shall not interfere with them,' said Denys, aghast. 'Ancient rights will be respected. In fact, for a considerable time to come, we shall only graze sheep there. It will be as it is, perhaps long after we are all gone. That deal was a deal in futures, doctor. The future may be a long way off, although I don't think it is.'

'To be sure, to be sure,' said the doctor, wondering what maggot Denys Fitzmaurice had got in his brain. 'They're harmless people and kind people, but they're very simple. It might be that some one had been putting

them up to mischief. It'll die out, I dare say. See all the help you're giving them with the turf. Didn't you share your ricks?'

'They went a very short way,' said Denys; 'there's nothing in that. But I shouldn't like the people to be against me. I didn't know I had an enemy in the world.'

'Maybe you haven't. There was a fellow you sacked out of Leenane's when you came into it. I don't know rightly what for. Something about killing an ass, I think.'

'I remember, Michael Casey. A bad lot and a bully. The people would not listen to him, surely. He used to act as rent warner on the estate and he frightened some of the people.'

'I never knew a bailiff to be good for anything yet,' said the doctor. 'He might be at the root of it.'

The walls of snow stood ten feet high by the roadside hedges till nearly May Day. Eyes ached for the sight of a green field, and ears for the sound of running water. The early spring had gone by, frozen to death.

Suddenly she came to life as the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty came to life, all hurry and bustle and commotion. Everything had to get a chance. Snow-drop and crocus, daffodil and primrose must fall into the lap of spring and live their little hour with the summer flowers tumbling upon them in a wild profusion. Such a smell of the long-prisoned earth, with the new green grass come alive and the flowers pushing their heads up everywhere, and the bushes bursting to full leaf, and all the birds singing like mad!

In one of the bound volumes of music which had

belonged to Denys's mother, and her mother before her, full of old-fashioned songs: 'Buy-a-Broom,' 'There's a Bower of Roses,' 'My Peace of Mind's Ruined,' 'Must I go Bound while you go Free?' and such things, there was one that came to Denys's mind, as suiting the season. It had a chorus beginning—'Oh, what a getting upstairs!' It was indeed 'a getting upstairs' for the lark climbing out of sight and the flowers scaling the invisible dark.

It was a wonderful May for the travellers to come home, and all preparations had been made, but still they did not come. The Dowager, accustomed to foreign travel as she was, had stood in a Roman square in the effulgent sunlight to see a procession pass, had gone straight from it into a great church, cold as stone—St John Lateran, high above the Campagna, where the stately House of God builded by hands shut out the warm sunlight and the scent of new hay blown up from the wide plain. The result was Roman fever, and at the Dowager's age it was serious. Leenane wrote to Denys that he knew his mother would weather the storm: she was far too profoundly interested in life to think of leaving it—and she had announced her intention of staying on in the world to see Dawn married. More, she wanted to see her grandchildren. 'When I know the family succession is safe,' she had said, 'I shall be ready to meet my Maker.'

Leenane reported this saying to Denys with a sublime unconsciousness. Perhaps he had forgotten that moment when he had been aware that Denys was sweet on Dawn: perhaps he had never taken it seriously, although he would certainly have preferred Denys as a son-in-law to Hilary Arundel. Still he had not been

able in this connection altogether to forget Denys, a trowsle-headed boy, dressed like a peasant, sitting on the sunny side of the ditch, to whom he had played Providence.

There was a drought that summer, wonderful to relate, and the people's little wells ran dry while the water trickled away from the bogs and the river fell lower than any man remembered it.

Sometime in the summer Lord Leenane came home alone.

'No use moving the family,' he said. 'My mother just lives on by reason of her indomitable will. I left them at an old convent in the hills. We shall take her to the Riviera for the winter, and I must be at hand. I don't want my old mother to die without seeing me. So you'll have to carry on a bit longer without me.'

Denys had no objection to carrying on. He was dining with Lord Leenane on the evening of his arrival in the little room at Castle Clogher overlooking the waterfall, which was called the Little Parlour. It had a groined roof, painted blue and fretted with stars, and the wide window commanded a lovely view of bog and mountains, between the mountains a silver flash of sea.

Usually the Little Parlour was full of the sound of the waterfall; now too tiny a thread of water ran to make even a little song.

Denys listened for the name he wanted to hear and it did not come. He waited so long that a dull suspicion came to him of a possible design in its withholding. Leenane was devoted to his daughter. She was so much the central fact in his existence that she could not long be out of the conversation.

The name came at last, so naturally that all Denys's suspicions were put to flight.

'Dawn has turned down another highly eligible young man,' said Leenane. 'This time a sprig of the Roman aristocracy, Prince Capaletti. I can't say I'm sorry. I don't want a foreigner for my girl. But my mother, who holds on to the world as keenly as ever from her sick-bed, is furious. The Prince is immensely rich, it seems, and the women rave about his looks. I don't see them myself: Sophie says he is a typical Roman patrician, and that he walks like the wind. Maybe so. I prefer the islander. I like your looks better, Denys.'

Certainly Leenane must have forgotten that old suspicion of his. Fortunately the shaded candles on the round table set in the window did not betray Denys's sudden rush of colour.

'She has turned down a couple of good islanders since we went out,' Leenane went on. 'The Italians gape at her when she goes through the Roman streets as though they saw a goddess come to life. Their women are very beautiful, but they have not the height and free grace of my girl.'

'I hope she is not still thinking of Arundel,' he went on, after a pause. 'I don't think she is. Dawn has too much spirit for that. What do you say, Denys?'

Denys was not obliged to give an answer, which he would have found difficult.

'I wonder why I asked you that, boy!' Leenane said, with a little laugh at himself. 'Your opportunities for studying the ways of women have been less than mine. They are mysteries to most of us. Some men think they can spy on women. They are

coxcombs and rotters at that. Women must keep their secret till they choose to reveal it to some man.'

Denys could have said with certainty that Dawn was not thinking of Hilary Arundel. He had had no communication with her but he was certain that she had cast out of her proud, pure young heart the man who had played fast and loose with the affections of more than one woman.

'Any more news of Arundel and the poor woman he married for her money?'

No: Denys had heard nothing. But some honesty in him impelled him to say that it was hardly true that Arundel had married Mrs Aarons for her money.

'Tut-tut!' said Leenane testily. 'I know that fine cock-and-bull story you told me. He is devoted to the lady, and he married her to make her happy, while all the time he and the girl he's in love with are waiting to step into her shoes. It's a horrible story to my mind.'

Denys would not admit that it was a horrible story.

'No, no,' he said, 'you should know the lady he has married. Perhaps he is dominated by her personality. He is devoted to her, really and truly devoted. He gives her a reverence which he may not give to any other woman.'

Leenane flung out his hands with a gesture of dislike and despair.

'I don't understand it,' he said. 'I'm rather surprised at you, Denys, taking his part like that. Anyhow, I am very glad that it is not Dawn who waits for a woman's death to step into her shoes. Don't let us talk about it any more. I am sick of the subject.'

Denys forbore to say that he had not raised it.

They were sitting by an open window and the moths came wheeling in from the night, immolating themselves in the candles. There was not a sound outside, except the far-away barking of a dog, which seemed to accentuate the silence.

‘The river is very low,’ said Denys, ‘I’ve never known it as low; and my father says the same. There’s hardly a drop of water going over the fall.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ said Leenane, and laughed. ‘It’s a queer happening for this part of the country. I hear, Denys, that the people are grumbling at you. They say you’re taking away their water supply as well as the turf for their fires. They’ve raked up an old prophecy that this part of the country will yet be so dry that there’ll be no chance for the people in it, let alone the beasts.’

‘I know,’ said Denys. ‘I have been warned. The well of St Senan is very low this year. No one has ever seen it so low. If it runs dry they will take it as a bad omen and lay the blame on my drainage-works.’

‘It won’t run dry,’ said Leenane. ‘The rain’s coming. Ah, there’s a flash of lightning! I thought the storm was blowing up; it’s so still and hot. The drought is at an end.’

CHAPTER XXII

CALAMITY

THAT night's storm was long remembered. It was what the old people called a dry storm. All night long the earth and skies ached for the relief of rain which the torn and shattered heaven seemed powerless to release to them. Denys and Leenane sat over the fire and talked. There was no home-going for Denys in such a storm: and his father would not expect him. But some time, when the storm was at its height, there came a terrific roar and rumble above all the noise of Heaven's artillery, and both men leaped to their feet.

'The arsenal in the camp has been struck,' said Leenane.

There came a series of explosions and the windows rattled as though shaken by a gigantic wind.

That summer, for the first time, there was a summer camp at Dooras, about two miles from Castle Clogher. Some of the officers were pleasant fellows, who had relieved Denys's loneliness by their society and entertainments.

The lamps in the room had suddenly gone out. The fire was very low, and as the lightning leaped into darkness they saw the red glare overhanging the camp. Something pretty bad had happened.

Denys never forgot the race, bareheaded, in the

storm, across country: they had not waited for a horse to be put into the car. Indeed, the only horse in the Castle Clogher stables at the moment was a young, half-broken colt, who would not stand the terror of the storm. The camp lay below them on the plain, showing a red heart of fire, so they ran downward for a great part of the way, leaping bog-pools, scrambling over a railway embankment, occasionally wading or sinking over their boots in the boggy slush. The way they took would have been hardly possible in an ordinary year. The drought served them. They leaped across the river, a thin thread that gave them no trouble.

Long afterwards Denys remembered that he had heard Leenane sob: perhaps he had sobbed himself, from the terror and the swift running. From the last hill they could see that two or three fires were burning, close together. Against the flames they could see the dark figures of men moving.

Leenane stumbled over a tussock of coarse grass and fell. Denys helped him to his feet and kept him a moment to recover his breath.

'The flames are dying down, Leenane said. 'It cannot be so bad.'

Then Denys remembered. The munitions were kept in tents guarded by sentries and isolated by sand-heaps. The isolation had served its purpose: only a couple of tents were burning. But for the sand the explosion would have levelled Castle Clogher itself.

It was bad enough, but not as bad as it might have been. There was nothing to be done. Some of those in the immediate neighbourhood of the explosion had been blown to pieces. The wounded were being attended to. They turned away sick of the sights they saw

and went home. Before they reached home the rain came, heavy hot rain, criss-crossed with lightning, under which the earth smoked.

Lord Leenane went off the next day, and Denys returned to the Murrough Farm. The rain had interrupted the reclamation work, but not for very long : and it was good to see how what had been done stood the test of the heavy downpour.

For two or three days the whole countryside smoked. There was a heavy smell of explosives and the skies were very dark. The heat was intense, almost intolerable. The men on the reclamation works were very languid, drenched in sweat as they worked, half-clad, in the stifling weather.

Then one morning the country awoke to a new heaviness in the air, a dank and rotting smell. The people did not need to be told what it meant. From end to end of the country the potatoes were blighted.

It was a Sunday morning. Denys never forgot the strange, yellowish gloom in the little church, the pale faces of the people, the breathless atmosphere, loaded, it seemed, with the sinister smell of rotteness.

As he and his father moved to their places in the little church he had an idea that people looked curiously at him. A woman in the seat he entered moved, it seemed ostentatiously, to the other end, leaving a space which no one filled, although the church was crowded. He opened a window above the seat, but no fresh air came in, only a more stagnant breath from the miles of rottenness, shot through with the smoke of the munitions which yet lay like a cloud over the valley. When he had some difficulty with the window-cord no

one came to help him. The people were usually so friendly that he wondered.

The old priest, Father Tyrrell, who seemed hardly able to mount the altar-steps, said a few words from the altar as though to climb the pulpit-stairs was too much for him. He was very old, and he had seen more than one famine. His face looked livid in the strange, greenish light that came in by the windows. 'The Hand of the Lord was heavy upon them, but they were to be patient and to accept the Will for them as they had always been ready to accept it. There must be no murmuring. God, who had permitted the calamity, would send the help. They were to turn to the Lord and entreat His Mercy and the prayers of Heaven: and those who were in secret sin should humble themselves and seek the pardon of God, lest their sins should bring further punishment.

He ended with a groan, and the people looked in each other's pale faces as though each asked the other if his sin had brought the calamity.

Leaving the church, where the men lined up by the gates for the Sunday gossip, Denys glanced at them. They were not talking as usual, but looking down, as though with a sullen acquiescence in their fate. He was minded to speak to one or two of them. The visitation angered him, not because it had come, but because the people should still depend so largely on the treacherous root. 'It will be another matter,' he said to himself, 'when I give them the rich land for the barren bog'; and his eyes brightened and darkened for a vision of fat cattle grazing and golden corn waving and comfortable houses standing amid their yellow stacks where now was the unproductive bog.

'Come along, lad,' his father said, pulling at his arm. No one spoke or lifted his hat. A cold chill came upon Denys. What maggot had the people got into their heads about him?

He was away all the next day at a distant fair: the utmost he had been able to wring from his father in the way of concession was that he might accompany him to the fairs so long as he was content to learn.

'There's a lot your college education didn't do for you, my lad,' Pat Fitzmaurice had said, many a time, while his eyes doated on his son.

There were cattle to sell at this particular fair as well as to buy, fat cattle which had gone on by rail a couple of days earlier as well as store cattle that must be bought to replace them. But this day an extraordinary thing happened. There were no buyers for the beautiful fat cattle: equally no one seemed anxious to sell.

At last a Dublin dealer—a big, loud-voiced, red-faced man, who seemed to bring something of towns into the country fair, bought the fat cattle. Denys, or rather Pat Fitzmaurice, had had transactions with Mr Quigley before.

'I hear you're boycotted, Mr Fitzmaurice,' he said, with a jolly laugh, as he marked the cattle, cutting a triangle of hair away on the flank of each animal. 'They won't touch the cattle. So much the better for me.'

They were at the end of the Fair Green, out of hearing of the buyers and sellers. Indeed, the buyers and sellers had seemed to fall away from Denys and his father leaving them and their cattle isolated till Mr Quigley came.

'Boycotted!' repeated Denys, and his father echoed him, in tones of amazement.

'The bog-boys have got it into their heads that your drainage works have brought calamity on the country. They say St Senan's well has run dry for the first time in the knowledge of man. You're as bad as the woman who fried St Molaga's trout. Sure, God help their little wit!'

It was absurd, preposterous, ridiculous—but even in his first rage against the ignorant folly of the people Denys felt the seriousness of it. Once let them take up this attitude and all was lost. They could make it impossible for him to live and work among them. His father's blank face of consternation hurt while it added to his rage and irritation.

Father Tyrrell—he felt he could trust Father Tyrrell—a saintly, wise, cultivated old man, who had had his training at Salamanca long ago, and lived in a strange loneliness from people with his own tastes and ways of thinking. When Leenane was at home Father Tyrrell found a warm welcome at Castle Clogher; he and Denys were great friends: otherwise he had little society beyond the peasants and small farmers of the country-side. But he had a considerable library, a clock fitted with the Westminster Chimes, and a bob-tailed sheep-dog, for company in the long evenings, and he did not complain.

Father Tyrrell would be vexed and yet patient with the people, as he always was when he came up against some superstition so hard to be fought with in these primitive minds. He would be grieved for this boycotting of the one whose visions had been all of good for them. He would do his best: but would he be

able to move them? Denys doubted that he would, if the people had really got this thing into their heads. It would be as it was at the time the Pope removed the Friday abstinence for the King's Coronation. The people had merely said: 'Pope and all as he is, he couldn't do it,' and had abstained more rigorously than they might otherwise have done. The incident had amused Father Tyrrell very much at the time.

But St Senan's Well! Was it possible the well had gone dry after the torrential rains of the days following the thunderstorm. If it had gaped in the drought surely the rains should have filled it up again.

The midday meal was eaten in almost complete silence, Pat Fitzmaurice sending anxious, fond glances between the mouthfuls at Denys sitting with a set face the other end of the table. Denys did not seem to know what he was eating: absently he took salt with his apple-tart, and then pushed the plate away from him untouched. He had eaten barely anything. When his father had finished—despite his preoccupation, he waited for that—he got up and said he was going to see if St Senan's Well was really dry.

'I'll come with you, lad,' said Pat Fitzmaurice, getting up slowly.

'You'll miss your smoke and your read of the *Western People*,' said Denys tenderly. 'Let me go alone. I'll cover the ground more quickly.'

'I'm comin'. I want to see the queer sight. Man and boy I've lived in this place nigh on seventy years, and I never knew that well to be empty. Would the drains you're puttin' in the bog draw the waters from the well?'

'I don't see how they could. It had its own spring.'

They went off side by side, the young man and the old. St Senan's Well lay between the Murrough Farm and Castle Clogher. It was a little cup of clear water under a gnarled and twisted thorn-tree, dying of its great age. The old branches carried many votive offerings from pilgrims who had been cured at the well. Crutches and sticks swung in the wind from the branches, and many old rags were tied on to them.

They looked down into the well, father and son, side by side. Where the clear water had been, and the darkly green, slimy stones of the encircling wall, where the little silver minnows had swum round and round, or lain, silver on gold, on the yellow sand, all was as dry as your hand. There might never have been water there.

Denys stared at what he saw, dumbfounded. For all his education he had enough of the people in him to feel that the drying-up of St Senan's Well was ominous. There was, or had been, an inscription on a flat stone at the head of the well, now so encrusted with moss and lichen that nothing of it could be read : it had run :—

By me, Senan's Well,
The sick shall have heal;
When I shall run dry
Great ills shall come thereby.

The well had run dry, for the first time in the traditions of it : and in Denys's face was dismay; almost a look of guilt, so that Pat Fitzmaurice, looking on its young goodliness, pitied his boy.

'It's dry, sure enough,' he said. 'It *can't* be the drainage works.'

'They *could not* affect it with so much of distance between,' said Denys, and looked away to where the people were coming in twos and threes, by the hard-trodden field path that led to the holy waters. Some people were quite near, but were standing as though they would not approach the well while Denys and his father stood there.

He straightened himself as though he would face something that needed all his courage.

'There will be calamity,' he said. 'It is the curse of allowing people to live on potatoes. I would have given them rich, corn-growing lands. They will blame it on me—that I have taken away their turf; I have caused this last summer's drought: I have dried St Senan's Well, and brought the ill upon them. Good Lord! And what visions I had!'

CHAPTER XXIII

OTHER PEOPLE'S TROUBLES

THE people's resentment soon made itself felt. The good weather had come back, too late to save the potatoes. There had been a bad and bitter blight in the air. On the trees the leaves hung shrivelled and dead. Everywhere one could smell the rotting potatoes : it was impossible to get away from it.

All Denys's work was at a standstill. Not a man would work for him. The young engineer he had brought down from Dublin went off to another job till the people should come to their right minds. A considerable number of men had been employed on the drainage-works. They loafed idly now at cross-roads or stood about the village street, and the wives and children suffered accordingly. Even the harvest of the sea was threatened. A steam trawler had come into the quiet waters and gone off again carrying great quantities of fish. What chance had the leaky old boats and the oft-mended nets against such modern contrivances.

Denys was in a mood, irritable and broken-hearted. He hardly remembered Dawn Finucane in these days. The work was at a standstill. Soon there should come the winter rains, and Nature would be taking her own back with both hands. All the streams would be running turbidly from the mountains, swelling the Flesk till it overflowed and washed away the work of

months, beside taking its usual toll of crops and sheep and cattle. The river-god would drink his fill of oblations this season, and the people would die of the tainted food and the starvation. He had dreamed such dreams of their prosperity and seen such visions.

The camp had folded up its tents, and had left the valley silent and empty by the time November came. There were still two or three piteous invalids left behind, too ill to be moved : a wing of Castle Clogher had been turned into a hospital for them. The strenuous work being at a standstill, Denys had leisure to visit these unfortunates, and forget, while he was with them, his own grievances.

The boycott was, by this time, an established thing. No more, when cattle were to be bought and sold, did Denys drive off in the dark of the morning with his father to fair or market. His father did better alone. His administration of Lord Leenane's affairs in those days were mainly clerical; the active part had to be left to some one else. He missed the busy country life which he had learnt to love. He hated the askance glances the people cast upon him when he met them, even at the church, even when they came to him with their complaints or their petitions : and on such business they came stealthily.

'They wrangle less,' he said to himself angrily, 'because they must come to me to settle their disputes. Lord Leenane had better appoint a more popular agent.'

Very little report of this trouble went to Italy, where Leenane was still held by his mother's illness. Denys kept himself to himself. He would not complain to his father, because the old man felt his son's unpopularity

too heavily already. Father Tyrrell had done his best. He had preached at and argued with the people. 'The Pope,' he said one day in a half-humorous rage to Denys, 'has an easier job than an Irish parish priest, when he is up against the people. And they say the Irish are a priest-ridden people! They will keep their superstitions though I've been fifty years trying to make Christians of them. They'll starve for their superstitions now.'

'We must see that they do not starve when the time comes,' said Denys, with a grim little smile, like a sad winter sun coming out on a gloomy world.

'If we could but bring back the waters of the well we might do something with the people,' said the priest half-humorously.

Denys was looking haggard that winter. He did not thrive in the atmosphere of ill-will, and his thwarted visions were troublesome. Yet he would not go away. He stayed on, with a certain dogged faith in something turning up to bring the people to their senses. It seemed like enough that the something would take the form of famine and pestilence. Even that, perhaps, would not bring them to their senses. They would lay the sufferings and the deaths at his door.

Meeting Father Tyrrell one day as he was on his way to Castle Clogher, to visit a young English officer who had been dreadfully burnt in the explosion, the priest looked at him compassionately.

'I'd go away, if I were you,' he said. 'You're looking ill, and there's not much you can do. There will be plenty later on. They are still eating the old potatoes. The stocks will hold out till after Christmas. Of course, they miss the money coming in—but what can you do?'

Father Tyrrell shrugged his shoulders in a way reminiscent of his foreign life.

'I can't go away,' said Denys: 'I am waiting for something to happen. Don't ask me what it is, because I don't know, but I feel that something is going to happen.'

The old priest stood and looked after the young man as he went away from him into the wide desolation of the bogs.

'There goes a man,' he said to himself, 'suffering as badly from a broken dream as other men from a broken limb. I wish St Senan would send back the water.'

They were all pretty heavily burdened in these days. The people were like children. He had tried to argue with the women and read it in their faces and manner that he, who should be the custodian of holy things, had failed in his duty.

Denys went on across the bog, gradually ascending the hilly country, and came at last to Castle Clogher.

Captain Thierry was just emerging from cotton wool. There had been a time when only weary and patient eyes had been visible. Skin had been grafted on to the worst burns of his face. But he had not yet been allowed to see himself in a glass.

He read constantly and smoked a good many cigarettes. Denys had brought him a bundle of reading. The boy—he was little more than that—looked up and smiled, as the other boy—who had become habitually careworn these last few months—drew near and sat down beside him.

'They think I shall soon be able to go home,' he said 'I have been wanting to tell you. There is only one

cloud on the joy—a pretty thick one. Am I an object? I think I must be, for they will not let me see myself in a glass. I must look a ruffian with this beard. And—there is a girl. There is also my mother—but mothers don't mind somehow.'

'Nor do girls,' said Denys wisely, 'if they are the right sort of girls.'

'Oh, Claire is the right sort of girl,' said Thierry eagerly, 'only, of course, if one is an object—would it be fair to the girl? Just at first, when I thought my eyes were done for, one thing pierced through the agonised pain of it—"I must give up Claire, I must give up Claire." I shouldn't be surprised now if I had said it when I was under the anæsthetic. That little sister has told me I shouted a lot. Do ask them to let me have a glass. I want to know what lies before poor Claire. She has been wanting to come ever since it happened, but I forbade her. It would have been too much for her, poor child. Now tell me—how are your affairs going?'

'Much as usual.'

It was the first time they had been allowed anything like a lengthened talk. The morning was very mild and a window stood wide open. In a vase there were a few monthly roses and an unseasonable spray of honeysuckle.

'I have been on my back nearly four months,' said Thierry, 'and I am weary to be out there.'

He pointed to the world outside the window, bogs, and mountains almost velvet black, save where a cloud opened above them as though Heaven looked through, and there fell a great shaft of light upon all the bog-pools, turning them to dazzling silver.

'We can manage that any day. I shall bring my little car and take you for a spin as soon as the doctor says "Yes." Perhaps the nurse might take it on herself. You are your own man again, are you not?'

Sister Mary was consulted. She was a lean, gawky girl, with spiritual eyes.

'To be sure,' she said. 'Any day at all, while the fine weather lasts. I mean, as long as it's not teeming rain. It's a lovely day to-day. A pity you didn't bring the little car.'

'I'll go back for it,' said Denys. 'What's four miles to legs like mine. Nothing. It's no more than that, cutting across the bog. I'll be here by two o'clock, if that will suit.'

'Just give him time to have his lunch. You can have a bit with him if you like, though it's a place where you don't ask people if they've a mouth on them as a general rule.'

'I'll feed before I come back,' said Denys. 'You look as though a run would do you no harm. You'd better let me take you another time.'

Sister Mary's eyes danced with amusement.

'Just imagine a nurse leaving her patients to go tearing over the country with a young man in a motor-car,' she said. 'Why, I'd deserve to get the sack right off!'

'Your patients are nearly well. There'll be nothing for you to do.'

'There'll be plenty for me to do,' she said, and a shadow fell over her face. 'I'm waiting for it. The poor foolish people! I nursed typhus in the Islands last year, and had a narrow squeak myself.'

'There !' she said, as though she admonished herself. 'That's a nice way to be talking, as though you wanted to frighten people out of their lives. I'll have him ready for you when you come back at two o'clock.'

She followed Denys to the door as he went away.

'Don't be letting him see himself in pools or anything of the sort,' she said. 'I don't know how we're going to break it to him. The only way I can think of would be to let him see himself first in that Claire Rochford's eyes. He's always talking about that girl. I wonder if she'll rise to it.'

'I wonder,' said Denys, going off.

'I wouldn't be too hard on a girl,' sighed the little nurse. 'He must have been a lovely boy before he got burnt. If she'd only think of how he went in when he needn't have done it.'

Denys came back to find Thierry sitting up, gaunt and weak, in a big arm-chair, wrapped in a heavy overcoat.

'Now doesn't he look beautiful?' said Sister Mary, and patted the patient's cheek.

Denys smiled, but there was something forced in the smile. He was afraid that Claire Rochford would need all her courage. Poor Thierry, with the imploring patient eyes! Would Claire Rochford rise to it?

The invalid sighed deep content as the soft air flowed on his disfigured cheeks. His eyes devoured the beauty of the day—a black and white day, he called it, and marvelled at the light pouring from behind the cloud, moving slowly over vale and hill, as though an immense Hand shed light from its Five Fingers upon the world.

'I'm thankful for my eyesight,' he said, with fervour.

Half-way across the bog Denys pulled up the motor and pointed to the little field where the gnarled thorn-tree overhung St Senan's Well.

'There is the cause of most of the trouble,' he said; and told the story of the drying-up of St Senan's Well, how he was blamed for it, and the belief of the people that calamity would follow.

'Let me look at it,' said Thierry, who was in the Royal Engineers. 'I think I could walk as far as that with the help of your arm. As Sister Mary says, I should be feeling my feet. What an angel that girl is!'

Denys got out of the car and assisted him to alight. They turned aside from the bog road and went slowly across the field to the well. As they approached a few shawled women, who had been saying their prayers by the well, retreated before them.

'We wouldn't eat them,' said Thierry. 'Are they frightened of me?'

'No, no,' said Denys hastily. 'It is only that they think I've no right to be here—they think my presence a profanation.'

Thierry used a strong word very softly.

'Let me see this well of yours now,' he said, and went forward to the edge. Denys had a momentary terror lest the waters might have come back, and Thierry see his face for the first time as in a polished mirror. The Fingers of the Hand were at the moment pointing downward at the well and the little green field.

But no, the well was parched. Not a trickle in the muddy dust and sand of it.

'It is very simple,' said Thierry. 'The spring is dammed or diverted. The explosion at the camp is probably responsible. It shook all this part from end to end. The water may come back or it may not. The spring might have been dried up by the summer drought, but it should have filled again. Perhaps when the floods are out the spring will reappear.'

'God send it—and soon,' said Denys devoutly.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BENEFACTOR

A LITTLE later Sister Mary spoke into Denys's ear, which she seemed to find sympathetic, her trouble about Robin Thierry.

'He can't stand it,' she said. 'We've done all we could for him and he's as well as he'll ever be, but we can't give him a new face. I shan't be able to refuse him the looking-glass much longer. I've found out one thing. She wanted to come to him—that Rochford girl—and he wouldn't let her. I've been blaming her in my own mind that she didn't come. I'm half afraid he'll never let her come. He was talking yesterday of volunteering for the West African Frontier Force. I said to him: "You know what it is: blackwater fever, and you won't live to take your first leave." He smiled a queer kind of a smile. I don't think he'd mind if he never came back.'

'So bad as that!' said Denys.

'I got angry with him,' went on Sister Mary, with something like a suppressed sob. 'I said to him: "If it's suicide you're after, you're less of a man that I took you for." I did, God forgive me! And he only smiled and said nothing.'

'Could you get her here?' asked Denys, 'without letting him know?'

'I thought of it myself.' Sister Mary looked at him

with musing eyes, which all of a sudden Denys discovered to be beautiful—gray eyes with dark lashes—beyond the beauty of the steadfast soul behind them. ‘I’ve got the girl’s address. Didn’t I write all the letters for him while his poor hands were tied up in cotton wool. She wrote him good letters, loving letters. I’ve a mind to try. If we fail . . .’

‘We won’t fail,’ said Denys.

He felt that he was going to miss Robin Thierry very much when he went. Sister Mary was talking of going back to her Dublin hospital as soon as she got rid of this last patient of hers.

‘I’d like to know what they’d say to me up there,’ she said, ‘if I was to tell them I was waiting on here because I expected the famine fever. I’ll come when I’m wanted, if I can!’

They were in the nurse’s little sitting-room, off the long room, which had been used as a hospital ward after the explosion at the camp. A few of Sister Mary’s personal belongings lay about, a work-basket, a despatch-case, a few books—Denys noticed that most of these were poetry—photographs: a Venetian glass vase with a monthly rose in it. They gave the room somehow a pleasant feminine atmosphere.

He glanced idly at a man’s photograph on the mantelpiece and was arrested by the debonair, gay face.

‘What a good-looking fellow!’ he said.

‘A great friend of mine,’ said Sister Mary, and her eyes suddenly looked down. ‘A Dr Vandeleur at the hospital. He’s going to be married to a lovely girl. They’ve been engaged for years.’

‘And this?’ asked Denys, passing on to another.

'My father. He was killed trying to stop a runaway in the hunting-field. Just look at him ! Isn't he bonny and young? He was fifty when it happened, but sure he wasn't made to grow old. I was terribly fond of my father, and he of me. Many's the day I longed to go after him.'

Poor brave soul ! Denys had surprised her secret. Well, well, she carried it bravely. She was a splendid nurse, so cheerful, so courageous, so tender-hearted, yet so firm with her patients.

Before there could be any result of the letter to Miss Rochford the first case of sickness occurred in the village. The winter rains had set in and the mountains were wrapped in chill mist. Just before the weather broke there had been a day when the Reek, fifty miles away, had appeared as though a couple of fields off. An ominous sign of the weather that. The same evening the sun had gone down, pale, luminous, white : a bad sign again. In the night the rain began. 'We'll maybe have it for months now,' said Denys disconsolately to Sister Mary. 'Only for those fools I'd have made all tight against the rains by this time.'

He walked down later in the day to look at the reclamation, a good deal of which would be undone if there was going to be a bad winter. He had not heard of the case of sickness in the village, but, after he had passed through the poor street, something struck him violently on the side of the head. His sou'-wester just saved him. It was a particularly vicious, jagged bit of flint.

He looked in the direction from whence it came, a gaunt hill-side, covered with whin bushes and boulders of rock of all shapes and sizes, some as big as a small house.

The wind sighed and lifted the cold mist of rain. Nothing stirred : even the rabbits were in their holes.

He made a stride or two forward, then recognised the hopelessness of it. He might just come upon the one who had thrown the stone. On the other hand, he might as well look for a needle in a rick of hay. It would be ridiculous chasing a fugitive in and out through those boulders and behind whin-bushes.

But he was very angry. His disappointed dreams had, so to speak, gone sour in him. He was often light-headed with annoyance and indignation at the fools who had frustrated all his plans for their good.

He stalked on, tall and slight in the mist, to the abandoned reclamation works, there to make a discovery which added fuel to his wrath. Something had happened to the buildings he had put up. They were wrecked : the pumping station and all his plant had been pretty well destroyed.

He set his teeth hard when he realised what had happened. They must all have been in it, the cowards ! the fools ! They had accomplished more ruin in a night, for the place had been untouched yesterday, than could be undone in many months. There was a big slice of his ten thousand pounds gone, thrown away as completely as though it had been flung into a bog-hole.

He swore aloud that he would conquer the fools. He would bring in expert men to do the work. O'Dea, the Dublin engineer, had often asked for skilled men rather than untaught labourers. He would win in the fight against Nature and ignorance. When he had won it would not be for them. He could not remember that they were his own people, these who had broken

his dream. Other men, not they, should reap the benefit of what he had done.

As he went back through the village an old woman cursed him. He passed her, taking no notice. Then a dog, one of the half-bred collies that were a danger and a terror to the passer-by, rushed at him. He lifted a stick to defend himself, and the dog fled, screaming. Then came the dog's owner, one Jamesey Geraghty, belonging to the class the people call 'the tinkers.' A harmless fellow enough when sober, Jamesey was a terror when he was drunk, or even had drink taken, or drink on him, for there are gradations in drunkenness in Ireland.

Jamesey Geraghty advanced on Denys, brandishing a big blackthorn.

'Is it to be desthroyin' me little bit of a pup ye'd be?' he shouted. 'You that's brought the curse on the country. The hunger's been here these many days and the sickness has come now, an' ye brought it, ye brought it, ye unhung villain!'

Denys raised his stick to defend himself. He was aware of people running through the mist, a gathering crowd, every one menacing and hostile, where they had been so kindly.

'You are all mad,' he said. 'You have brought it on yourselves. It was a blackguard thing to destroy my plant and machinery. Whoever did it shall pay for it.'

Down came the blackthorn with a crashing blow, and Denys was in the mud. The blood was in his eyes and mouth, and he had a vague idea that the crowd had tried to restrain Geraghty. There was a second blow. Geraghty had managed to kick him in the face before

he was pulled away. Then there was the roaring of many waters and the sickness of pain went off in mists of unconsciousness.

When he was again aware of anything beyond chaotic and terrible imaginings, he opened his eyes on a wall covered with chintz paper which had a pattern of roses on a trellis. He remembered that paper. It was on the walls of the long room at Castle Clogher which had been used as a ward for the victims of the explosion. He tried to turn his head towards the next bed, in which he expected to find Robin Thierry, but he could not move, and the effort hurt him. He felt as though his head was the size of ten, and it ached intolerably, especially in one part where it seemed to him that there must be a gaping wound.

But though he had hardly moved, some one was aware that he was awake. A trim, white-clad figure came to the bedside, and a pair of compassionate eyes looked down on him. Sister Mary's. He was very glad it was Sister Mary and not a stranger.

'So you are awake,' she said, with her air of quiet cheerfulness. 'That was a nasty and a mean thing. Don't try to talk yet. You're doing famously—a credit to your nurse and doctor. The wound is closing nicely, and he didn't spoil your beauty, the brute, though your nose was as big as a potato, and much the same shape, when you were brought in. The mud on his boots saved you, or rather the peat. He'd been damaging your property before he damaged yourself.'

'I thought I heard some one howling when I was asleep.'

'You did. It was Geraghty. I called him a brute, and he is a brute when he won't keep from the drink.'

But he's not a ruffian at heart. He howled over you till I had to turn him out.'

'What day is it?'

'December the sixteenth. You've been a fortnight out of the world. Well for you. It has never stopped teeming since. The river is out and the whole country swamped. There, that's enough for to-day. I expect your head's aching.'

'Just one thing—Thierry?'

'Out walking with his sweetheart in spite of the weather. She's bonny. She wraps herself in a Scotch plaid, the cutest your eyes ever saw. Not a bit of her to be seen but her brogues. I'll tell you to-morrow how it all happened.'

The next day he was allowed to see Robin Thierry and the girl who stood shyly in the background till she was introduced as Miss Rochford.

'Wasn't I a fool to distrust her?' Robin Thierry asked. 'Just look at her! Isn't she like Stevenson's woman:—

'Trusty, dusky, vivid, true,
With eyes of fire and bramble dew,
Steel-true and blade-straight.'

The girl looked up at the disfigured face, and there was no consciousness of the disfigurement in her gaze. The words of the poem indeed fitted her well. She was all of a bright brownness, deep lights of golden bronze in her hair, in her eyes, underlying the wild rose skin. She was little and lovesome, and even to Denys's perception she was delightfully dressed in furs and velvets, just escaping being too fine for the rigours of an Irish winter.

All was well with Robin Thierry. Denys fell asleep with a sense of satisfaction after that visit.

He was allowed to hear, little by little, news of the world out of which he had dropped for a whole fortnight. But he had really almost left convalescence behind before he was told what ravages the sickness was making in the villages round about—not typhus or typhoid yet, but a kind of enteric from which several people had died.

‘There are plenty of nurses and doctors,’ Sister Mary reported. ‘The Local Government Board has looked after it, and Lord Leenane telegraphed from Italy that no expense was to be spared. All that is needed is to be provided at his expense. He is coming home as soon as possible. I believe his mother is in a bad way.’

Denys looked up with a queer hopefulness in his eyes which puzzled Sister Mary. She knew nothing of the Leenanes, nor what the family consisted of. She had been too busy with her patients to have remembered to ask.

‘Has Lord Leenane any children?’ she asked the doctor, when they had their usual little council on the stairs after his visit. He had decided not to come again. In a day or two Denys would be quite well enough to go back to the Murrough Farm where his father was pining for his return.

‘One child, a daughter—Miss Dawn; a lovely girl. She walks like the Goddess Juno, a very young goddess, you understand: a perfectly simple, fair, sincere, and honest creature,’ said the doctor, who was a bit of a poet. ‘I’ve told Mr Fitzmaurice he’s not to go near the sick yet awhile. By the way, I hear there’s a bad outbreak at Carra Island. Strange how it recurs

there. They'll be asking for you, Sister Mary, but they can't have you. You must have a bit of a rest first. You've been working very hard here.'

'I always found a change of work the greatest rest I could have,' said Sister Mary, with a sudden brightness of look that made the doctor ask himself bewilderedly how he could ever have thought her plain.

'What weather!' he said discontentedly. He had put on his mackintosh and made an effort to open the door, and the rain and the wind drove him back.

'Go off now out of the hall,' he said, 'or you'll be taking a bad chill. What a climate! They say only a Westerner can stand the western climate. I don't know why we're not washed off the face of the earth.'

He made her stand back while he opened the door and got through; she had difficulty in closing it from the inside, although it was a heavy door.

Half-way up the stairs she paused to watch from a window the doctor struggling with the wind and the rain, his weather hat down on his nose, his mackintosh filling with the wind till it seemed likely to carry him off like a balloon.

As she looked the wind shrieked round the house—an eldritch cry. She had heard it cry like that before and had not heeded it. Now, with the news from Carra, the screaming of the wind and the vehement weeping of the rain daunted her brave spirit.

CHAPTER XXV

SISTER MARY

AFTER many days of rain, record rain and wind even in that country of wild storm, something happened in the night. Those who knew what an earthquake was said it was a slight earthquake. Nature was certainly very disturbed. All over the world there were earthquakes, and in the quiet exempt Green Island there were tragedies. The swollen rivers wrought much havoc. There were landslides in various places, none very serious in their consequences: but, that Christmas, a moving bog came down from Curraun and blotted out a whole village.

No wonder the people were frightened. Neither Denys nor Sister Mary heard of these happenings, for they were marooned on Carra Island, where the typhus had become virulent. While the authorities were talking of the scarcity of nurses and doctors owing to the prevalence of sickness, a few devoted people had gone off to the Island, carrying what medical requisites and comforts they could lay hands upon.

It was as though the world beyond the gray sea was blotted out for them. For days after they landed—there had been a fair interval—no one could approach the Island. Not a boat built by hands could live in the raging torrent that swept between the Island and the mainland. Often in bad weather the Island was

isolated for weeks at a time; there was always plenty of food stored against such happenings, so that they need not starve.

Almost everything else but food was lacking—blankets, bedding, drugs, medical requisites of all sorts. The day before they crossed a couple of doctors had arrived, volunteers, men in love with their profession, who had come down from Dublin hospitals as soon as the news reached them that there was typhus on Carra. The doctors were very interested. No one could explain how it was that when typhus had been stamped out elsewhere it recurred on Carra, accompanied, in this instance, by an obscure Eastern disease, the presence of which puzzled the profession.

The school-house had been turned into a dispensary. There was a little room to spare for Sister Mary, who was the only nurse so far, and a second was kept ready in case one of the medical staff got ill.

They had been met and welcomed by a tall, thin priest, who might have been a young man at first sight, so alert was he, so slender and upright: but the first impression was corrected by the silver hair at the temples, the weariness of the eyes, and the withering of the skin.

‘It’s good of you to come,’ he said. ‘There’s plenty of work to be done, though, thank God, the doctors came yesterday and brought what they could with them. We’ll get no more for many days, I’m thinking: we’re in for a time of storm.’

It was about eleven o’clock in the morning when they landed. The two doctors were already out on their rounds. They were housed in the Presbytery. They were going to make a hospital of a couple of

cabins down by the sea-shore, which were having their windows taken out and floors and walls whitewashed.

'Ye'll be getting things in order here,' the priest said, 'and there'll be a bit of lunch for you at my place at one o'clock. The doctors will be back by then.'

Sister Mary and Denys opened the cases they had brought with them, and set out the articles they contained, temporarily, on desks and tables.

'If I can get a plank of wood and a few tools I'll run up some lovely shelves,' said Sister Mary. 'I'm a grand carpenter.'

We'll manage that between us,' said Denys.

'You *would* come,' said the nurse reproachfully. 'I wish I could keep you at jobs like that, but I'm thinking I won't be able to do it, especially if Father Maguire's right and the relief won't come for some time. Look at that sea! Isn't it green? Upon my word, it makes me feel green. I never crossed the sea yet.'

'You would have a bad passage to-day,' said Denys.

'Remember I didn't want you to come,' said Sister Mary, and added, as though he were a child, 'You'll be more anxiety than you're worth.'

Her laughing eyes took any possible sting from the speech.

'It's a better school-house than most,' she went on, surveying her new domain, which was light and fairly lofty. 'And better kept than most. The blackboards might do for tables. The floor wants scrubbing, and I must see if I can find a whitewash brush and a pail of lime.'

'I'll do the whitewashing,' said Denys.

'You've long arms,' she agreed. 'I'd need a ladder,

and I never like them. They're born rickety. I never saw a safe ladder yet.'

She had been turning out her own little room, making a clicking noise with her tongue, which proved that she did not find all satisfactory.

'Too much upholstery,' she said, reappearing. 'I'll see if I can't clear out some of it before I sleep here. But I dare say I'll be on duty this afternoon.'

At one o'clock she appeared, spotless in her nurse's print gown and white cap, her waist caught in by a silver belt, the one bit of frivolity she ever permitted herself. It would have been a pretty figure if she had not been over-thin, Denys said to himself.

'If you don't want me this afternoon, I think I'll do the whitewashing,' said Denys.

'You wouldn't know how,' she returned. 'You're a lily of the field.'

He flushed as though she had hurt him.

'You forget that I was brought up at the Murrough Farm, with only one old woman to "do for" my father and me. I've often whitewashed the kitchen. It used to get a glorious brown from the turf smoke. It was a shame to wash it off, but it had to be done, and I liked doing it well.'

'Oh, you shall do it, then,' Sister Mary said. 'I think we can spare you lifting the sick and burying the dead. You're not over-strong yet. You shouldn't be here at all.'

'I didn't come to whitewash,' said Denys stiffly: 'any one at all could do that.'

She smiled as she looked at him.

'You've a will of your own,' she said. 'Goodness help the woman that has to keep you in order!'

Denys was suddenly shy.

'Ah, I thought so,' said the nurse to herself. 'It's all the more reason for keeping him out of danger as far as I can.'

They walked across to the priest's house, conspicuous as a two-story house, with an abundant supply of windows, in the irregular street of crouching cabins: it stood beside a gray stone church, with a dreary belfry, the whole effect a sad, gray monotony.

There were two men in the priest's little sitting-room when they entered it—a room made smaller by the rows of well-filled book-shelves around the wall. The two men stood with their backs to the window and their faces in shadow: one was more than common tall, the other short and square, both young men by their figures.

'Why, here is an old friend of mine,' said the tall young man, and there was a flash of white teeth in a most pleasant smile: the voice was beautiful, soft and rich.

Denys almost felt the leap of the girl by his side: it was as though her heart leaped.

'And I wouldn't wish to work with a better little nurse,' the alluring voice went on. Its owner had taken Sister Mary's hand and was holding it in an obviously warm clasp. 'Dr Molyneux, Sister Mary. You've heard me talk of her.'

He still held Sister Mary's hand when the introductions were effected, but presently, with a little shyness, she withdrew it.

Apparently the meal was not quite ready yet. Dr Molyneux, Father Maguire, and Denys fell into conversation about the books. The tall young doctor

whom Sister Mary addressed as Dr Roger, talked to his old friend. Scraps of their conversation floated to Denys's hearing.

'What have you been doing to yourself?' asked the deep, rich voice, which sounded like a caress. 'You were always thin, but you've no business to be as thin as you are, Sister Mary.'

'Sure, I'm hardy,' said Sister Mary, in a queer, delighted young voice. 'I've never an ache nor pain.'

'You never had in the hospital: so the lazy ones let you do the work. Do you remember when I had to prohibit your scrubbing the wards when your poor little hands were covered with chilblains?'

'It did the old chilblains good. It's no use humouring them. I've had great peace from them since you treated them.'

'Let me look.'

Denys, in a swift sideways glance, saw Sister Mary's hands extended and swiftly withdrawn.

'You should take better care of them,' said Dr Roger. 'It's a pity to spoil them more than you can help.'

A bare-footed child in a pink frock put in a red head and mumbled something which Father Maguire understood as announcing lunch. It consisted of fish, fresh from the sea and excellently fried, and a shoulder of mutton, and it was served with considerable refinement, although the cloth was coarse and the glass and cutlery common. These dishes were followed by a rice pudding, fruit, and black coffee: with cigarettes and a bottle of Burgundy to grace the feast.

'It's poor accommodation for you,' the priest said humbly, when the doctors praised the freshness of the fish and the flavour of the mutton: 'but such as it is

you're kindly welcome to it. We won't starve on the Island. We're better off in that way than the mainland, for we have to be self-sufficing.'

After lunch Sister Mary slipped away and left the men smoking and talking about the fire. She had promised to come back later for a cup of tea, but she explained that she had a good deal to get in order before she could sleep, feeling that she was ready to begin work on the morrow.

The talk flowed, and it was good talk. Denys, smoking his pipe before he placed himself under Sister Mary's orders, said very little, but enjoyed the good stories and the well-fought arguments and the play of wit. The priest took his part in the talk, although he seemed better content to listen to the two doctors, who brought the world to Carra Island.

'Upon my word,' he said in a pause while Dr Roger was lighting his pipe afresh, 'I haven't had such a pleasant day since I came to Carra twenty-seven years ago. I wouldn't be considering my own pleasure beside the poor people's sufferings, but the sickness has brought some good things to Carra, sure enough.'

Denys found a tall boy already employed in white-washing the school-house.

'Is that you, Mr Fitzmaurice?' called out Sister Mary's cheerful voice from the inner room. There had been a great swishing of water there when Denys entered.

'Haven't I got a fine whitewasher?' she went on. 'The schoolmaster lent him to me as well as the white-wash bucket and the brush. You can run home now, Johnny. Your father said I could only have you for an hour. Tell him I said you were a very good boy.'

The speaker followed her voice and appeared at the door of the inner apartment holding out something to Denys.

'It's an old student's coat that I came by honestly,' she said. 'It will save your beautiful clothes. It is quite clean. You're sure you want to whitewash?'

'It is the one aim and object of my life.'

'Ah, now, none of your nonsense! Here, then, put on the coat and get about your work!'

'I'm going to finish that floor for you first. I believe you've got chilblains still.'

'There now,' she said: 'you'll soon be as bad as Dr Roger. He has great old nonsense with him. I never knew any one but him to think of my ugly old hands. He gave me the loveliest stuff you ever saw or smelt for the chilblains, and he forbade me ever scrubbing again, saying that I was too good for scrubbing floors, that it was other people's business to do it. He thinks too well of me, does Dr Roger. Anyhow he's not here now, and this is not the hospital, so I can finish my little room, without asking his leave.'

Denys followed her to the door and looked in. The room was practically empty and the window opened wide to the wind and the rain. Without a word he took the scrubbing-brush from her hands.

'I heard you say you had to go to the shop,' he said. 'You'd better do it while there's light, and I'll finish this.'

'You—with those lovely trousers!'

'You can give me something to kneel on. I saw an old cushion somewhere. You had no business to be kneeling on the floor. You'll have rheumatic knees before you're twenty-five!'

'Listen to him ! You'd think he was a doctor,' she said, in high delight. It struck Denys for the first time that with a little flesh on her bones, Sister Mary would cease to be plain and become pretty. Indeed, he had forgotten to regard her as plain. How could she be with those eyes?'

When she came back—having bought half the shop she said—she found the floor washed, a bright fire lit in the grate, and Denys on the ladder continuing the whitewashing.

CHAPTER XXVI

QUARANTINE

SHUT up in the Island, intimacy grew fast. There were not nearly enough hands for the work, and Denys took his part in helping Sister Mary and acting under the direction of the doctors. Dr Roger, as Nurse Mary always called him, kept his eye on Denys as though he were feeling his pulse.

'I'm not half satisfied with your being here,' he said, one of those earlier days. 'As soon as the relief comes you go into quarantine at the other end of the Island, preparatory to being cleared out altogether.'

'And you?' asked Denys.

'Oh, I'm having the opportunity of my life. So is Molyneux. As for Sister Mary, you couldn't dislodge her. She's a little limpet when she gets a case to her liking.'

He was certainly a splendid specimen of manhood, almost aggressively strong and well. There was vitality in his looks, in the curl of his hair, kept well under restraint : in his colour, his deep speech, his laughter : everything about him spoke of life and the good-nature that came of perfect well-being. No wonder poor Sister Mary was dazzled. He had a softened way with her, being one of the men who must always have something different in their way with women : but there was more than that : there was affection and admiration in his

gaze when he looked at her, in his rallying manner when he spoke to her.

'She's true as steel, true as steel, that little woman,' he said one day to Denys. 'She's all nerve, yet never nervous. I've never seen her flinch though she has a soft little heart. You can always trust her to obey you implicitly. She never complains. There's no one I'd like better to have with me in a difficult case than Sister Mary.'

The two talked freely of Alice, who was apparently Dr Roger's fiancée.

'And what did she say at all when she heard you were coming here?' Denys heard Sister Mary ask one day.

'Took it like a Trojan,' Dr Roger replied. 'You see, she's going to be a doctor's wife. It's as hard sometimes as being a soldier's wife, and no one ever thinks of comparing the two.'

It was pretty to see Dr Roger making Sister Mary eat, and ordering her to lie down when she would stick to her post despite obvious exhaustion; but Sister Mary's eyes as she glanced at Dr Roger on these occasions were something from which Denys turned away. Poor Sister Mary!

After a fortnight, a curiously peaceful time, despite the anxiety and the hard work, the weather moderated. No more did the white sun shine from a vaporous sky, heaped with watery blobs of cloud. There came a season of frost, with blue skies and a bright sun, and the water in the Sound subsided to a calm and murmuring tide where it had run mountains or at least hillocks-high.

The relief came, and on a morning soft as April's,

Denys rather sadly obeyed orders and said good-bye to those with whom he had been in such intimate connection for a whole fourteen days. He did not know how he was going to put in his quarantine, even with the help of the books the relief had brought, which were handed over to him, since no one else was going to have time to read: and it was no use infecting the books.

'Good-bye, now,' said Dr Roger, in his deep, jolly voice—a voice that would coax the birds off the bushes, as Sister Mary had described it—'I don't want to see you again, not, at least, till we are all back among the healthy. There's only one way you could come back and we'd rather have your room than your company.'

Denys was lugubrious at the thought of his solitude. He had had no letters for a fortnight. The first letters he received brought the news of the earthquake and the resulting trouble. The newspapers were full of the bog-slide. The sickness was subsiding on the mainland. Other landlords were following Lord Leenane's example in feeding the people. Mrs Arundel had sent a thousand pounds for Denys to distribute as he would. There would be no need of relief works at all events.

'Here I must sit stewing,' he said discontentedly, 'with so much work waiting to be done.'

'Just as well for you to stew,' the doctor replied. 'I wonder you didn't get the fever: you were a very likely subject for it. Try to forget the disappointment and the ingratitude of the people. They are only children. They will be ashamed of themselves presently.'

'I hate to leave you all,' said Denys. 'Am I to go on day after day knowing nothing of what is happening?'

'You may get a fisherman to row you round here now and again,' the doctor replied, glancing from the window of the temporary hospital out on the blue and sparkling sea which lay beyond a narrow strip of sand. 'Of course, you can't land: but one of us could go down to the water's edge and shout you the news. I don't know if you'll get any one to row you. A queer thing, the exemption of that end of Carra from the fever! Naturally, they are desperately afraid of it. If I were you, I should write about what you know, the things that need remedying in Ireland, the work you've been doing, and publish it. You'll bring us help, maybe. The fishing-fleet is a scandal here. The boats couldn't weather any kind of a storm. No wonder the foreign fisher-fleet poaches our waters.'

After a few days Denys found a fisherman willing to row him round to the infected end of the Island, for a couple of shillings and a drink. He was very particular about the drink, because a faint heart was more likely to take the fever.

There was not much doing at the fishing, and Matt Burke became an object of envy to the other fishermen, many of whom had refused Denys; the drink and the florin had become an everyday affair. Despite the writing, which was becoming easier by practice, and the reading, Denys found time hang pretty heavily on his hands. He had made friends with a little spaniel, which seemed to belong to nobody in particular—the little creature had come in on a piece of wreckage some time early in the winter—and had made her his own for the sum of half a crown. 'Isn't it a quare thing the like o' her would be saved,' said the man who had picked her up, 'an' Christians gone to their watery

grave? She's no use to me, sir. For all she's quiet wid the childher she does turn an impident eye whin I spake sharp to her, as though she'd be sayin' "Who are you spakin' to, me man?"'

The little dog had been called Prince, without the smallest reference to her sex. Denys tried a variety of names and found that she leaped at Flora. So Flora she became, and a very delightful, amenable little dog she proved to be. Denys solaced some of his loneliness by teaching her tricks, which caused great amusement to the little community among which he lived.

'Isn't he a lovely fellow?' said the women, when Flora crossed her paws and begged, swam, died, looked for hidden objects, learned all such tricks with an ease that made Denys suspect memory, or, at least, inheritance.

Flora went with him in the boat, lying on an oilskin with one watchful eye fixed on him. She was like to prove a great alleviation of his loneliness, and she was a dog of great character: she had already justified her former possessor's estimate of her impidence by disregarding his advances when they met, while giving a lazy wag of the tail for the children.

Denys listened with amusement one morning to a conversation outside his window, between Mrs Mullarkey, his landlady, and another woman.

'They say he's harmless enough, stravagin' around wid the little dog at his tail,' said the other woman; and Mrs Mullarkey replied:—

'Och, indeed, he's rale dacent. I wouldn't say he'd much wit, but the antics of the little baste of a dog do be quare in themselves. Troth ye'd be dyin' wid laughin' at him: an' yet wouldn't you say the man

was soft that gev time an' trouble to tachin' the like to a brute baste?'

'Sure, the Quality's very fancy wid their dogs,' the strange woman responded.

At this point Denys thought well to show himself, and was received with quite unabashed smiles by the two women, the stranger to him remarking that it was a lovely little dog he had, and when she was in service on the mainland there was a little dog just like him, and he was a good mother, if ever there was one.

Ten days or so of Denys's quarantine had gone by when there came another stormy and wild interval, so that his visits of inquiry were interrupted. He managed to keep boredom from the door by writing a series of articles and sending them broadcast. It seemed to him that he had discovered a power of writing which he had not suspected in himself and he was very anxious to see what would happen to his ventures. This labour had solaced the gray days. Nevertheless he was glad when the sun shone again. By this time it was February, and he awoke one morning to dappled skies and a wind from the south that set all the birds to singing.

The last report he had had of the sickness was reassuring. They had isolated it successfully, and there were no more patients. The two deaths which had occurred seemed likely to be the last, for the other patients were convalescent. For some reason unexplained the fever had taken a light toll this time.

The boat made of skins stretched on wattles carried him buoyantly over the shining and sparkling waters. His spirits rose with the leap of the corrach. His quarantine was nearly up. He had found health on the

Island. He was going back full of courage and energy to take up the work which had been so ruthlessly and ignorantly destroyed—to build it up again. The people whom he had helped to save would have their eyes opened. Darkness and superstition and ignorance could blind them no more to the benefits he was about to bestow, had bestowed upon them.

The sparkle and glitter of the league-long water was in his eyes as the corrach pulled near the shore. Some one had seen him coming, not Sister Mary, nor Doctor Roger, either of whom usually came to call tidings of good cheer to him across the water. It was Dr Molyneux who came. Somehow his heart sank at the absence of his special friends.

‘Roger has got it,’ the doctor called to him. ‘Sister Mary’s in charge. We’ll pull him through, never fear, though he’s a bad case.’

Day after day, Denys came for news. It was a life and death struggle. Dr Roger had offered little of the resistance that might have been expected from his splendid physique. ‘It is his heart we are afraid of,’ shouted Dr Molyneux, as through a speaking trumpet one day, when the sea again showed catpaws and there was no likelihood that the corrach would be in use for some days to come.

Denys put his quarantine in jeopardy and walked by the shore on the succeeding stormy days, when he was wet through with the spray of the heavy waves, in his eagerness for news. For days it fluctuated. There came a very bad day. Dr Roger could hardly live out the night. Denys went away heavy-hearted, thinking of the brave, splendid fellow, and the women who loved him.

The next day he was still alive; the next there was a slight improvement. Little by little, and after many days, during which the patient's condition fluctuated, Dr Molyneux allowed himself to be hopeful. The very last day of Denys's quarantine the report was that the patient was doing well; there were no fresh cases; and as soon as Sister Mary would allow any one else to take her place by Dr Roger's bedside she was to be quarantined. Six weeks more would see them all off the Island.

'There's a young lady staying at Sherry's Hotel, just facing the Island, will be glad to see you,' Dr Molyneux bellowed through his closed hands. 'She is Miss Mandeville, Roger's sweetheart. You can tell her that she owes his life to Sister Mary.'

CHAPTER XXVII

'OH, IS IT YOU, MY OWN LOVE?'

DENYS walked up and down with Alice Mandeville on the long, level sands in front of 'Sherry's.' Carra lay in the midst of a magnificent bay. This half-moon of coast, holding the bay within it, was now Mrs Arundel's property. It was the next parish to America, as the people said. Not a patch of land, except the Island, lay between where they walked and Sandy Hook. The western sun was covering the mainland and the Island with golden haze, breaking up the quiet heaving sea into a myriad of glancing facets, turning the sea-gulls, as they darted and flew, to things of living silver and gold: making the heron, as he stood lonely by a pool, a creature of light.

Alice Mandeville was, like her lover, more than common tall. Her face had an almost perfect beauty of colour and outline: some people might have thought the short upper lip, revealing white small teeth when she smiled, an imperfection. That short upper lip had the innocence of a child's lip, it was full, as though 'some bee had stung it newly.' Her brown eyes were soft and gentle: her voice music itself: and she had a certain stateliness which went well with what Denys vaguely perceived to be beautiful attire. It was a Redfern coat and skirt worn with sables. Such an apparition of beauty and elegance could seldom have

flashed upon Sherry's, whatever might happen in days to come, when the Transatlantic base which Denys prophesied should be an accomplished fact.

Denys, as he walked up and down with Miss Mandeville, waiting for the motor which should take him the first stage of his journey, saw, with his mental vision, while he listened to the lovely voice, the new Belfast that was to spring up in the west. He saw the fleet lying easily at anchor in the bay. He had been told that the fleet had come in one night at midnight with a prodigious puffing and panting which had frightened the people out of their lives. When dawn broke they had seen it lying at anchor: about ten o'clock, without disorder or confusion, it had quietly steamed away.

Down at the horns of the land he saw the Transatlantic vessels lying. He saw the dockyards, the ship-building yards, all the bustle of life. Then he came back to the sweet voice, the gulls screaming and dipping, the cormorants diving, the heron still fishing in the pool.

He could have only been absent for a few seconds, for he had not lost the thread of Miss Mandeville's conversation. She was discussing what they could do to repay Sister Mary, so far as any one could repay priceless service: apparently she was in a position to play Providence if she would. She was asking Denys what could be done? Had she people who could be helped? A year's foreign travel? A little house of her own? Help to start a nursing home if she wished it?

Something of unutterable sadness came down on Denys's mood. The futility of it all smote him. There was nothing that could be done for Sister Mary. She had saved the life of the man she loved for this beautiful

creature. Her needs were so simple. Denys had never heard of any relatives, beyond the father who had been killed stopping the runaway. He knew, as though Sister Mary had said it herself in his ear, that there was nothing to be done for her.

And the Bay. Would it really be better when all this shining innocence had departed and a great city, a hive of industry, had sprung up in its place? His thoughts went back to the thing that had been said in his hearing when he sat on the sunny bank above the Little Bog and dreamed. 'He'll have the Second Sight, like his mother.' It was not always well to have the Second Sight—for the possessor.

He had refused the hospitality of 'Sherry's,' to the proprietor's evident relief, for the mainland was still terrified of the Island. He had a drive of forty miles before him; at the end of it the slow train which should take him to Drum, where his father would meet him with the pony-trap. Lucky for him that they had just started a motor-mail service! A year or two earlier it would have been the long car which now lay in the shed at the back of 'Sherry's' waiting on the tourist season, which began early at 'Sherry's,' because of the trout and sea-fishing.

Miss Mandeville, accompanied by her maid, was patiently waiting till the quarantine was over and Dr Roger Vandeleur free to return to her. If things had been going badly with him she had intended to get to the Island somehow in time to see him. The news of his illness had recalled her from Italy. 'Do you think I should have been sitting here and he wanting me?' she asked, with a sudden fire in the depths of her brown eyes. 'I should have bribed a fisherman to take me

across and leave me there. Once I was there they could not have turned me away.'

Denys received such a heart-stirring welcome from his father as repaid him for much of what he had gone through. There was very little said or done: but the 'I've wanted you, boy,' the hand-clasp, the moisture in the blue eyes, the tremulousness of the smile, spoke eloquently.

The blackthorn was all out in bloom: the primroses were showing like faint stars on every bank: the lambs were little white blobs in the shadowy fields beside their large soft mothers: blackbirds and thrushes were singing as they drove homewards. Patrick Fitzmaurice had handed over the reins to Denys with: 'I don't see as well as I used,' an abdication which touched Denys sharply. His father had been so unwilling to abdicate.

'You must get glasses, father,' said Denys.

'My father and his father before him lived to be over eighty, and never wanted glasses,' the old man said obstinately, 'I'd like to think I'd be the same.'

A light broadened before them like a full moon rising and they heard the sound of a large motor-car ascending the hill. The rays of light spreading on the darkening sky reminded Denys of a very fine Aurora Borealis he had once seen. There was just time for him to jump down, take the little mare by the head and lead her into a gateway, keeping her quiet with talk and caresses before the monster passed.

'It's Leenane's,' said Pat Fitzmaurice, from his post of observation in the trap. 'Himself and the young lady and Mrs Metcalfe were inside it. The car came a week ago. I didn't know they were expected so soon.'

The news and the encounter gave Denys a restless pillow for many hours, although he ought to have been tired enough from the journey to sleep soundly. The birds had begun their low, sleepy whistles and calls before his eyes closed at last. He had lain with his face turned towards Castle Clogher, rejoicing that she was there, anticipating, now with raptures of delight, again with fear, the vision of her that must come to him within the next few hours; wanting to fly towards the meeting, counting the hours leaden, again feeling that he had no courage to meet her and look upon her face. He wondered if the time of absence had changed her. It was eighteen months since they had met. A sudden fierce jealousy wakened in him of all the men she had met during those eighteen months. He believed that few men could pass Dawn Finucane without being taken with her beauty and charm. Had any one supplanted him? At long last the tossing and turning and the troublesome thoughts ceased, and he slept quietly.

He had forgotten to ask about the Dowager oddly enough, and his father had said nothing. He heard at the breakfast table that she was dead. Patrick Fitzmaurice was sure he had written the news to his son, and it had appeared in all the papers. She had left a tidy bit of money too, the people were saying, and it was all for Miss Dawn.

While they were still at the breakfast table a messenger came with a characteristic note from Lord Leenane.

'MY DEAR DENYS,—I don't know if you are there or where you are. What the devil do you mean by dropping out of the world these six weeks past? You are a nice

sort of a fellow to be acting as my agent. You have heard of my poor mother's death. She was herself to the last, and we took her out of Rome some weeks ago because she insisted that it was no place for an Irish Protestant to die in. I could not be sure whether there was not some humour in her saying it, for she was not a narrow-minded woman. She sleeps in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome, near your friend, John Keats.

'We are all delighted to get home. We ought to have been back for the sickness, but my mother lived from day to day. You seem to have done everything for the people, returning evil for good—eh? Now that the fine weather is coming or come, we had better get back to the reclamation, if you still stand by it.

'Come to lunch if you get this. We've heard a cock-and-bull story of your having gone off to nurse some other sick people, as though you hadn't enough of your own. Besides, I didn't engage you for a sick nurse.

'Come as early as you can after breakfast, and we'll walk over and see what damage was done to the plant.

'Ever yours,

'LEENANE.'

Denys set off as soon as he had smoked a morning pipe with his father. The little spaniel he had picked up in the Island and called Flora followed at his heels with Rory, who showed a great tolerance of the new arrival. He was at Castle Clogher by eleven o'clock.

Lord Leenane was in the room he called his office, and Denys found him there, entering unannounced. Lord Leenane sprang up when he discovered who his visitor was and shook Denys warmly by the hand.

'Now, why the devil haven't you written to me?' he began.

'I've been nursing typhus patients on Carra Island.'

'Clear of infection—eh?'

'I wouldn't have come here otherwise. I've been quarantined for six weeks.'

'Let me see. I've written to you a dozen times during the last eight weeks and the devil a word could I get from you.'

'I couldn't write, of course, till I was free of infection. We were cut off from the world. I was in hospital before that.'

'Yes, I remember. What happened you? The person who wrote for you said you had got hurt—your nurse, I think. What happened to you?'

'This.'

Denys bent his head and ruffled his hair lightly. The mark of the stone was still plainly visible.

'That was a narrow thing! How did it come?'

'An irresponsible person named Geraghty, who had been indulging too freely, avenged the wrongs of the people with a blackthorn. I believe he or some one else kicked me when I was down. My mouth was cut and I had a good many bruises.' Before that some one had thrown a stone.

'Good God! You never told me! Was the fellow prosecuted?'

'I'd no time to think of prosecuting. Besides, there was no malice. It was the drink. When I was well enough to get about the fever had broken out at Carra. I wrote to you just before that explaining that there was a boycott on and the people were unfriendly. I had to leave it to other people to feed them. The

feeling was too strong against me. I believe they thought I was accountable for the evils that befell them. They didn't understand that I was trying to save them from depending on the potato for food. They traced everything to St Senan's Well running dry, and they got it into their heads that my drainage-works had something to do with it.'

'Ah!—the well had run dry. I remember the tradition. People said it never had run dry and never would.'

'One of the officers who was blown up in the camp last summer—he was nursed by good little Sister Mary, who wrote to you for me in this very house—thought the explosion had something to do with it. It had altered the flow or stopped it in some way. When I saw it last it was as dry as my hand.

'The water may have come back, or may come back. That would queer the boycott—would it not?'

'I think the boycott is over. As I came through the village the people who met me gave me the time of day, sheepishly, and the children dipped to me. My father says that Father Tyrrell preached some very strong sermons. I wonder they listened to him.'

All the time he was listening for Dawn's footsteps, for her voice in the silence of the house.

'Sit down, Denys, you're looking peakish,' said Lord Leenane kindly. 'That's a nice bit of dog-flesh you have got. Where did you pick her up?'

Before Denys could answer Dawn came into the room. The eighteen months had made a great change in her. She had grown to full effulgence of beauty. Perhaps the Italian suns were responsible for the touch of gold that had come to her complexion and the deep

hues as of ripe corn in hair that had been paler. Her eyes were as blue as cornflowers, Denys thought, dazzled by so much beauty: and how kind they were!

'Oh, Denys,' she said, 'we have been hearing, Aunt Sophie and I, of all you suffered, and how unjust it all was. You have been splendid, Denys; and the people are very sorry, now. Geraghty came out and cried as we went through the village. He said you were his best friend, and that it was the drink and not he that did it. I'm afraid he was not altogether sober, but he said he was going to take the pledge next week. Then we met Father Tyrrell, and he said they will go back to work and work for less wages till they have made up what damage they did.'

'H'm! I am glad they've come to their senses, said Leenane grimly. 'They'll have to do a lot to undo what they did. See here, Dawn—your friend Geraghty did *this*—he nearly killed Denys.'

Denys drew back shyly, while with an odd, tender manner, as though he were a son, Lord Leenane parted Denys's hair to show the scar.

'Oh, poor Denys!' said Dawn, drawing near, with soft eyes of pity. Her breath was on Denys's cheek; he smelt the sweetness of her hair.

'This fellow hadn't had enough punishment,' said Leenane, with a manner grimly affectionate, 'but he must go off to nurse typhus patients on Carra. Luckily, he didn't get it himself.'

'Oh, but how splendid, Denys!' said Dawn, with an intoxicating homage, as she gazed at him over her clasped hands.

It occurred to him that she had never looked as

beautiful as in the sombre blackness of the garments she was wearing. Round her neck was a string of milky pearls, and little hoops of pearls dangled at her ears. She had a curious stateliness for so young a girl. Dawn had suddenly grown up.

'I suppose they've forgotten all that nonsense about St Senan's Well?' said Leenane.

'Oh, no,' said Dawn. 'It was just that convinced them they were wrong. The water came back. There was something like an earthquake shock here in the late autumn, the time of the bog-slide. The papers gave a full account of it. Afterwards the water came back to the well.'

'Robin Thierry thought it would,' said Denys.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A LAST PARTING

MRS ARUNDEL had sent for Denys to come to see her. The letter was written by Mary Arundel, Hilary's sister.

'She is very ill,' she wrote, 'but she will not lie down like any one else. She *will* be dressed and sit up in her chair. The doctors say that it is best to humour her. You will be horrified at the change in her. She desires urgently to see you. Come quickly, lest it should be too late.'

The urgent summons sent Denys flying off to England. Mrs Arundel was at Homewood. He hurried through, hardly stopping for a meal, grieved to the heart by the knowledge that Rachel Arundel was dying. He remembered that some one had said that she was a woman never to be forgotten by those who knew her. He had hardly estimated the strength of his admiration and pity for this noble woman till now, when he knew she was dying.

Mary Arundel came to him in the stately drawing-room, he remembered, with the long windows looking out over velvet lawns on a beautiful view of the South Downs stretching away to Brighton and the sea. He was standing by the windows when she came in, and she crossed the wide stretch of polished floor to him with a swiftness unlike the slow movement he remembered in her.

'Oh, you are good to come,' she said. 'She wants to see you. Do you know that she has sent away Hilary? She would not let him stay to see her die. It is unjust to Hilary, but what can one say to a dying woman? My brother is not a child. Why you and me and not him? It is unjust to him, and the poor boy is miserable.'

'He has consented to be banished?' asked Denys, with a hardening of his young face.

'What can one do—with a dying woman?'

Behind her eager defence of her brother, Denys discovered something amiss, and was sorry for this passionately devoted sister.

'But she will change her mind? She will see him? He will remain within call?'

Mary Arundel's face turned a deep, ashamed red.

'She has banished him: she has forbidden him to come back till she is dead. She has sent him away . . . to friends . . . to be comforted. You must not misjudge my brother. There is no quarrel—no coldness. He has always been devoted to her: he is still. In a sense she dominates him. She could not bear to see him suffer.'

'I should send for him,' said Denys decisively. 'His absence will be misunderstood. It is unfair to both of them. He should be here.'

'If he will not come?'

'I think I should make him come.'

He felt profoundly sorry for the girl, who was evidently so unhappy. Plain to see that she was suffering.

'You might make him see how people will regard his absence,' she said, as one who clutches at a straw.

'I?'

'Men will listen to one another. He would never

have gone of his own free will. When she told him to go, perhaps . . . he was glad. He has never seen death.'

'How long?'

'The doctors say she may last some days. On the other hand, a moment might end it. Her heart is barely going.'

'Where is he?'

'He is with the Bartons. Dr Barton died three months ago. Margery and her mother are at a little house at Ockley, near Dorking, which my sister-in-law gave them. There is a train from here at 12.30.'

'I can see her first.' He had looked at his watch and found it was 11.35. He had been early in coming down.

'There is a train back at 2.30.'

An eager hope had sprung up in her face.

'I shall bring him,' he said, with a confidence that answered the appeal in her eyes, hoping his face revealed nothing of his feeling towards her idol.

'After you have seen her there will be time for some lunch. You must be hungry.'

'Thank you,' he said. 'I had breakfast at seven.'

He went upstairs tiptoe to the wide airy room where Rachel Arundel lay on her raised pillows drawing difficult breaths. The room was a beautiful one, giving an impression of light and space; not much furniture, but what there was of it, beautiful. The windows were open towards the wonderful view, and the room was full of flowers and smelling like a new-watered greenhouse.

She put out a hand, which she seemed hardly capable of lifting, to him and he took it and kissed it. He

noticed how much it had wasted. The rings he remembered were no longer there : the shrunken fingers would hardly have held them.

‘Sit down . . . near me,’ she said.

He drew a chair to the bedside. Mary Arundel had gone out, closing the door behind her. They were alone, save for her little spaniel, that lay on the satin coverlet and regarded him with a watchful eye, the little body shaken now and again with a deep sigh.

‘It was . . . very good of you . . . to come,’ she said. ‘And . . . so quickly. . . . I was afraid . . . there might not be time. . . . I sent for you . . . chiefly . . . to ask you . . . to stand by . . . Hilary. People will misjudge him . . . they have misjudged . . . our marriage. . . . It was . . . my doing . . . the only way . . . I could give . . . him . . . all I wanted . . . to give. It has not been . . . a marriage . . . really. . . . I still . . . look upon myself . . . as Simon’s wife. . . . I have left it . . . in my will . . . that I am to be . . . buried with him. . . . I am glad . . . I did not live long enough to . . . to wear those poor children out. . . . It was the only way. Promise me . . . you will . . . stand by Hilary!’

‘Mrs Aarons . . .’

He saw a faint smile flicker over the dying woman’s face. He went on hurriedly :—

‘You have done wrong in sending Captain Arundel away from you. What will people think of his turning his back upon his benefactress at such a time?’

She lifted her hand for silence.

‘He would have . . . hated . . . to see me die,’ she said.

‘I believe he is better than that,’ Denys answered

on a sudden impulse. He did not believe in his heart that Hilary Arundel was better than that. What did they see in him, those women? Rachel Aarons, Margery Barton, Dawn, Mary Arundel? How many a man has asked the question about another man and found no answer to it. 'He is better than that. You must not make him look a coward and an ingrate before the world. No man's standing by him could redeem him from that.'

Fear leaped into the suffering face and his heart smote him.

'I see . . . you are right,' she panted. 'It would be worse . . . for him. I only thought to . . . save him.'

'He will be here in an hour or two. I am going for him.'

A brightness flashed into her face. Remembering it afterwards Denys realised what heights and depths of self-abnegation there may be in a woman's love.

There was no time for more, and Mrs Arundel was plainly exhausted. He lifted her hand and kissed it before going out of the room to look for the trained nurse in charge, whom he found in the corridor, waiting patiently.

'Keep her alive till the afternoon,' he said. 'I am going for Captain Arundel.'

'I will do my best,' the nurse replied, some warmth coming to her cold and weary face. 'He should not have left her.'

He had known before Mary Arundel told him shamefacedly where he should look for her brother. At Ockley he was directed by a grassy road which ran through woods to Mrs Barton's house. The woods were carpeted with primroses. It was a beautiful fresh day,

with all the birds singing, and Leith Hill, in blue haze above the beautiful village. The road through the woods was delightful enough to tempt any one to linger, and the day was unseasonably hot, although with a nip of east wind in it. But he had no time for loitering. He counted that there would be just time to catch the 2.30 back, if there was no hindrance, if he should find Hilary Arundel at Lee Hatch, Mrs Barton's house. The next train was at 4.36. There was no time to be lost if Hilary Arundel was not to be disgraced, if Rachel Arundel was not to die without the presence of the man who owed her so much duty and affection. It was of the brightness on the dying face that Denys was thinking as he strode through the wood, looking out for the landmarks that had been given him, the house with the pigeon-cote on the lawn, by which he was to turn to the left, the white gate, the little avenue uphill. He was thinking of Mary Arundel—a fine, brave, devoted creature. Not of Hilary Arundel nor of Margery Barton. His thoughts were hard there. They were going to be married, enriched by the woman who was left to die alone. He felt quite capable of taking Hilary Arundel by the coat collar and dragging him with him, if he were not ready to go.

He had passed the house with the pigeon-cote and the white gate, the little avenue uphill, the cottage with the pond in front of it, and had crossed by the bridge and the wall letter-box, and suddenly there was a door between high privet hedges, with three steps up to it, a green garden door beyond which he heard a familiar laugh. The latched door yielded to a touch. He looked through a pergola, bare now, to a red house

wall. Between where the pergola ended and the house began to saw a green lawn with hyacinths growing in beds cut in the turf. A fox-terrier came and barked at him. Two pairs of eyes were regarding him, one pair defiant, or at least defensive, the other ashamed. Captain Arundel had been helping to tie up the climbing rose-trees. He still held a ball of raffia in his hand. Miss Barton had a little basket and scissors, which she put down on a seat beside her as she turned to meet the intruder.

All of a sudden Denys's wrath died down before the miserable guilt in Hilary Arundel's expression. The laugh he had heard had infuriated him, but the man before him did not look a happy man.

'Have you come to tell me she is dead?' he asked, and as the colour ebbed away his fair complexion became mottled and lived.

'He would never have left her only she insisted,' Margery Barton said, with a heightened colour, looking as though she would step between the two young men.

Denys's mood turned dreary and cold.

The visions again. It was as though he could see into the man before him, could feel with his trembling heart and fear with him. The girl, he said to himself, was the better man of the two: she would fight for what belonged to her.

'She is not dead,' he said, with a chilly gentleness. 'You will be in time. She should not have sent you away. Her magnanimity overshot the mark. What would be said of you if you left her to die alone? Can you come at once? We can just catch the return train if you do not delay.'

Arundel turned helplessly to the girl.

'You know I hated leaving her,' he said.

'Yes, yes, I know. She sent you to me for comfort. There never was any one like her. But Mr Fitzmaurice is right, though I do not acknowledge his right to interfere.' She flung a last glance of defiance at Denys and turned to Arundel. 'Go, my dear,' she said in soft command.

In his heart Denys knew that Hilary Arundel was afraid of the death-bed : he knew that the dying woman knew it; that Margery Barton knew it.

Well, his secret was safe with the three of them. Perhaps he could not help it.

CHAPTER XXIX

DAWN GIVES COMFORT

A FEW days later Denys was on his way home. He had saved Hilary Arundel from himself. Some of his judgments he had revised. The dandy and the fop had disappeared when Hilary Arundel cried like a child beside the dying bed of the woman who bore his name; her dying hand had gone out weakly to stroke his hair. He had been inconsolable, like a child, when she was dead. Looking at the miserable eyes and the sullen haggardness of the boyish face, Denys recognised that he had been too severe a judge. More, with the inner vision, he knew that the great-souled and gracious woman who had passed away had drawn out of Hilary Arundel the best that he was capable of giving. She had written her name upon his life and character. Perhaps—she would save him yet. Perhaps—it was the childishness in him drew the love of women.

He thought he was little likely ever to see Hilary Arundel again. He parted with him with no regret. It was otherwise with Mary Arundel, who was taking her brother to Italy for three months. Denys appreciated the fact that he was not to be allowed to go straight from his wife's death-bed to Margery Barton. Mary Arundel had said good-bye to Denys with obvious regret, walking with him by a quiet wood

path to the stile where the car would pick him up. While they waited she said the words which Denys felt she had meant to say when she suggested the walk through the woods, instead of the car coming in the usual way.

'I can never thank you enough, Mr Fitzmaurice, for all you did for us,' she said. 'Don't think ill of Hilary. I think this has done great things for his character. He was a nervous child and he was frightened by a nurse when he was little. She took him to see some one who was dead, and lifted him to kiss the dead face. It gave him a great terror of death. I think that has gone by for ever.'

The car was in sight. They shook hands warmly and parted. Looking back from the bend of the road Denys saw her still watching him.

'A fine creature,' he said to himself. 'She will be a corrective to that child's worship of him and desire to give him all he asks. She will keep alive the soul which Rachel Aarons awakened in him.'

He had waited for the reading of the will in which he was told he was interested.

'I, Rachel Aarons,' the will began, 'Arundel' was written in brackets.

She had provided splendidly for Hilary Arundel. After a number of bequests to friends and servants came this clause.

'I leave a thousand pounds to Denys Fitzmaurice, who negotiated for me the purchase of the Erris Estate, Co. Mayo, Ireland, containing somewhere about fifty thousand acres, and on the sale of the estate, whether in whole or in part, he shall receive ten per cent. of the purchase money.'

'Not much in that,' said the gray-whiskered man who had read the will, congratulating Denys on his thousand pounds legacy—'bog and mountain, isn't it?'

'Yes,' said Denys, and his eyes were gray as water: 'but I think the bog and mountain will make me a very rich man one day. I believe she knew it.'

'I desire to be buried by the side of my dear husband, Simon Aarons, in Highgate Cemetery,' was the last clause of the will.

'I believe old Simon satisfied her better than the young man after all,' the lawyer said, locking up his bag; he seemed to have taken a fancy to Denys. 'Extraordinary the foolish things women will do. The young man shows very proper feeling. It might not have worked out as well if she had lived longer.'

'She knew she had a very short time to live,' said Denys. 'It was the only way to provide for Captain Arundel, for whom she had a great affection. It was a nominal marriage.'

'You astonish me. So it was a romance. Well, I'm glad. I confess it was a shock to me when I heard she was going to marry again—and a mere boy. I had a great admiration for her. She was the making of Simon.'

'She was the noblest woman I ever knew,' said Denys, and left it to his listener to spread the tale.

So Denys went home with his thousand pounds and his Castle in Spain, which no one believed in but himself. There was plenty for him to do getting the reclamation-works started again and setting to work to procure better cottages for the people than they

lived in. His hands were so full that it explained why he saw so little of Dawn Finucane. He was at the Murrough Farm. Time was when he had been at the beck and call of Castle Clogher. Now, though he was often there on business with Lord Leenane, he was usually too tired at night to dine out. There was so much to do to make good the wanton destruction of last autumn and the havoc wrought by the winter storms. The people were thoroughly ashamed of themselves. Geraghty had taken the pledge, a thing so surprising that it made other people, some of whom did not need it but only took it by way of precaution, follow his example.

Lord Leenane had smiled over Denys's Castle in Spain.

'He'll never see a penny of that ten per cent.,' he said. 'What Ulster has, Ulster holds—she doesn't share anything. Denys, when I tell him to expect nothing, gets the queer look in his eyes that he had that day long ago, when he looked at the Little Bog and saw it fair pasture. He's a sensible lad as a rule, but he has a queer streak in him. I wonder how he persuaded that woman—a Jewess too, with the gift for finance of her race—to believe in his dreams.'

'I think Denys sees farther than any of us,' said Dawn, to whom he spoke.

Then she said,—

'By the way, we owe Denys a good deal, don't we, father? He bought those Raeburns.'

'Denys is too much of a gentleman to profit by a blunder like that. He would not hear of touching the money, beyond what he had paid. He is a man of honour.'

Dawn still looked dissatisfied.

'A good many people would think we ought not to be made rich by Denys's sense of honour. If the Jew dealer had got the pictures we might have whistled for the money.'

'I'd have had a fight for it.'

Then Leenane said an odd thing.

'Maybe you'd be giving Denys back the money yourself, Dawn. I said to him once that no one need ask my girl unless he had fifty thousand pounds in his hand. I had known enough of what it meant to be keeping up a title and a big place on an empty purse.'

Dawn said nothing, only turned and looked out of the window.

'It was the luckiest day I ever had when I found Denys the Dreamer sitting on the bank overlooking the Little Bog, his eyes gray as water. Things have gone well with us since then. We were up to our necks then, Dawn; up to our necks. And Maurice gone from me: and I seeing no way out of the trouble.'

Still Dawn said never a word.

There came a day when the sea-fog creeping in over the land blotted out the plain and hill. The damp chill pierced to the bone. Only the hardiest of the black-birds still sang. At Castle Clogher, Mrs Metcalfe sat over the fire with a novel. Leenane was in Galway for some meeting or other.

The smoke of the fog blew into the room and damped even the fire. When Dawn came in, hatted and rain-coated, Mrs Metcalfe stared.

'You are not going out, Dawn?'

'Yes, I am going out. The dogs will not hear of my staying in.'

'You'll get wet.'

'I can change when I come in.'

'Oh, well, I dare say it will do you good. Don't go on to the bogs; you might get into a soft place before you knew where you were in this fog.'

'I'll keep to the road.'

She went half-way to the door and came back.

'You remember Denys's Sister Mary, dear?' she said.

'Yes: what of her?'

'She's dead of the typhus. I've just heard. The people are saying she will be the last to die of it. They think she always wanted to offer herself up for them.'

'How grieved Denys will be!'

'Yes: I wonder if he has heard.'

She started off through the mist, four rejoicing dogs leaping and barking about her. Her father had said that Denys had been melancholy of late.

'I hope the people will never forget her,' she said to herself, as she took the way through the fog towards the Murrough Farm. Momentarily it thickened. It was smoke-coloured now, with a hint of indigo-blue behind it, the wall of the fog pressing in from sea and sending its messengers before it.

It seemed a strange, lost world in the fog. It began to be very wet. The sheep bleated close by her and there came the answer of the lamb, and she could not see them. A cow lowed. It was as though the creatures were lost in the fog. The dogs kept close to her skirt. She looked down, but could not see the solid earth while her feet felt for it.

She was not afraid. She had been accustomed to say that she knew every inch of the bog, so she kept on, her hands in her muff, her feet feeling for the solid road; now and again she felt grass under them and

drew back. She had to trust her feet. All around her came the melancholy sounds the animals were making. A bell boomed from somewhere with a ghostly air. She could not have told from what direction it came, or if it was a bell, at all.

The dogs were keeping so close to her that they impeded her progress. They were frightened, poor things, and their coats were wet with the dripping fog that hung on her curls and her eyelashes. She stooped and spoke to them by name. Encouraged, they bounded on before her, and suddenly one barked.

Some one loomed out of the mist—like a tree walking—Denys.

‘You!’ he said, and took her hands, warm from her muff, into his own cold and wet ones. ‘What do you mean by being out in such weather?’

‘What do you?’ she asked, with a queer sense of exhilaration. It had been lonely in the fog, with all those children, as she called the dogs, depending on her and frightened.

‘I am glad to meet you, Denys,’ she went on. ‘The fog was getting a bit thick, as the Londoners say. I suppose you are lost too. It makes all the difference in the world when two are lost instead of one.’

‘You feel that,’ he said. ‘Would it be the same if it was any one else? Hilary Arundel?’

‘Poor creature! Why do you talk of him?’

The chilly disdain made him say to himself, that he would have to defend his old rival against her, but not now—the moment was precious.

‘Do you know what I was doing, Dawn?’ he said. ‘I was crying. I am glad you did not see me crying.’

'I know,' she said. 'It was for Sister Mary. I cried too. I was coming to you; to comfort you.'

'She died for them—that they might have their happiness,' he said brokenly: and suddenly he lifted her hand and laid it against his eyes. Something warm reached her through the cold damp of his face. She put up her arms and drew his head down to her. He had had dreams of how tender she could be.

'My poor Denys,' she said. 'She is of the Noble Army of Martyrs. Be comforted—*my* Denys!'



